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The Great Valley

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THE GREAT VALLEY

THE GREAT VALLEY

By
MARY JOHNSTON

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THE GREAT VALLEY

CHAPTER I

THE ship *Prudence*, carrying goods and folk to Virginia, experienced a long and eventful voyage. Sailing from Leith in August of the year seventeen hundred and thirty-five, she met storm in the Bay of Biscay and again storm in mid-Atlantic and was beaten far from her course. When that was stilled and serene skies overhung her there befell a sudden and obscure sickness, due, they thought, to fish that had been taken and eaten. Quick to come it was quick to go, but two men and a woman lost their lives by it. Hard upon its heels the crew, upon some grievance, threatened a mutiny. All these evils, however, were of the first few weeks. Tranquillity at last came aboard and to stay. Master, mates, crew and passengers gave part of the credit (under God) to John Selkirk, sometime minister of Thistlebrae kirk, a mighty man of prayer and counsel, with a heretical and adventurous bent that had at last (after storm and panic in the fold) set his thought upon the New World. When a thing definitely formed itself in his mind he always strove to put it into action, so here he was upon the *Prudence* with his family and some household gear. The fact that his eldest son had been for several years in Virginia determined him upon this colony rather than upon Pennsylvania to which otherwise he might have inclined. He shone in trouble, and so it was that the terror caused by storm and pestilence subdued itself under his

guidance to resignation, patience and faith. And when half of the seamen armed themselves and threatened havoc he it was who stood forth and thundered as from Sinai, then so wrought that men's hearts softened and accommodation and amnesty were reached. His age was forty-six, his person tall, gaunt and strong, his hair early gray, his nose big, his mouth wide, his eyes those of a dreamer who would if possible act his dream. As soon as all was well upon the ship he took to sitting much of the day and also on starlight nights in one particular place of the deck, whence, it seemed, he watched the entire ship, the sea and the sky, and yet had time for the Bible upon his knee and also for a world hardly visible as yet to the mariners and his fellow emigrants.

Such was John Selkirk. His wife, whom he called Jeannie (Jean Mackay), a fair-haired, apple-cheeked, notable woman, full of faults and winsomeness, ruled him for his own good through a great range of small matters. Their children with them upon the *Prudence* were Robin, Euphemia, Thomas and Elizabeth, the eldest sixteen, the youngest ten. A married daughter, Jean, had been left in Edinburgh. Andrew was the son already in Virginia. In addition they had with them Mrs. Selkirk's sister, Miss Christiana — or Kirstie — Mackay. This family might be considered the leading one of three or four such groups upon the *Prudence*, both in character and attainments, and through the fact that its head was a minister, even though, in the circles of the unco' orthodox, a vehemently contraried one. But all were simple Scottish folk, no great of the earth among them.

The *Prudence* carried fifty for Virginia, chiefly sober Strathclyde persons changing poverty and sorrow and crowding for a fairyland hope. There were families, and also a number of youths, some at loose end, others coming

out under indentures. The ship was but small, the discomfort, to a later sense, would seem so huge as to slant toward torment. But most on board were used to close personal quarters set in a wide, indifferent world. Not a few, too, owned a door opening upon spaces of spirit, whether elfin green or ruby red or upper sapphire or remotest violet or all-gathering white. So it was not so bad as to sybarites it might seem.

All knew one another very well by now, helping and hindering through the days and nights.

The voyage was all but made. Scotland belonged almost to another life, though to one that would be often recalled. There to port hung Virginia, under a mist. They said it was low and sandy and pine-clad, and there were rich folk and poor folk and tobacco and red Indians. Presently the *Prudence* would enter Chesapeake Bay that was as great as the Irish Sea. Already, much too soon for any need, the women were gathering together their goods and gear, thinking of their dress and their children's dress in which to curtsy or fashionably to nod to Prosperity.

The child Elizabeth stole to her father, with whom she was a favorite. "Tell me a story of the bonny house we're going to build!"

John Selkirk, seated in his corner of observation, took his eyes from the far-flung line that was the New Land, and put his arm around his daughter. "It'll be of logs, and much, I'm thinking, like the houses in the oak forest and by the lochs that our ain forefathers buildd! It'll be buildd toward the frontier, I'm thinking, lassie. Andrew says there's more room and promise there — and they must be crying out in those parts for inward help. Aye, there'll be great trees and green moss and likely a burnie."

"There will be fairies?"

"There'll be hard wark. But if you will be having the

fairies maybe you'll find them—but do you never forget, bairnie, that the Unseen does not stop at fairies.—A house of logs, but and ben, and a field of maize.”

“A cow and a dog and a byke of bees?”

“Like enough! And near or far, other neighbors, and a kirk to build if it be not built.”

“Fairies and a cow and a dog and a byke of bees and a burnie to paddle in.—Will the fairies too have come from Scotland?”

Selkirk smiled upon her. “They come from your heart and head, my bairn, so wherever you are they are there too. Do not take them for more than they are, but keep yourself behind them and atop them!”

“Mother says she will spin in the house, but Aunt Kirstie says she will spin out of doors.”

“Bairns and women parcel it all out like flower beds!—But life may not go like that, Elizabeth. And do not forget, with your spinning and paddling and running and crooking your finger to the small folk, that the true story is the Soul's widening and lifting!”

“Aye, Father. Will our house be by Maggie Burns' house?”

“It's not likely. Virginia is an unco' great place.”

With that the outlook cried that he sighted Cape Henry, and the emigrants crowded to look, for they knew that when they had rounded Cape Henry they would enter Chesapeake and the danger and discomfort of the salt sea be soon past and the pleasant land beneath their feet. In the general movement the Selkirks drew together, seeming to cling to one another, with their blue and gray eyes upon the promised shore. All were tall and well made, with a slant toward spareness of flesh, Mrs. Selkirk being the only rosily rounded one. But her sister Kirstie was slender as a wand. Robin and Phemie had good looks, Thomas or Tam was a quaint,

ugly lad, Elizabeth promised something, but just what could not yet be said. They were strong and lithesome and fond of one another and brought up strictly in the fear of the Lord, with good heads and a dash of fun and some knowledge of the road to Elfland, and strong passions, stoutly leashed.

Cape Henry neared them, Chesapeake opened before them, at last they might be said to be in that Virginia that enticed and frightened them, but more enticed than frightened. The *Prudence* entered a great roads where the river James met the bay, and having touched at Point Comfort and received her clearance from the king's officials there, proceeded up the river to Jamestown that was the port for Williamsburgh, the capital, and the surrounding country.

CHAPTER II

“**A**YE,” said Andrew, “it’s as I’ve been telling you. The rich and the high have everything hereabouts, verra much as they have at home. I’ve just waited for you to be moving westward.”

His mother feasted her eyes upon him. “You’re sae grown and widened, Andra!—And you talk sae bauld—but there’s the auld laddie in you yet!”

“All free white men talk bauld here, Mither. We maun, being so above the black and the red.”

“Your tongue has nae changed neither—”

“But it has!” answered Andrew. “I fell back into the Scots for you, Mother. When you go to England if you’re canny you’ll speak English, and Williamsburgh and the James are main English.”

“And you’ve done sae weel—”

“So-so! So-so!” said young Andrew. “I’ve saved something, and my father has something with him—and here he is, and I’ll talk to him of Colonel Matthew Burke who has a grant of a hundred thousand acres in New Virginia beyond the mountains and is looking for families to settle it.”

He was twenty-two and very sufficient—Andrew. Later in the day he went walking with his family to show them the sights. It was autumn and the mile long and proportionately wide Duke of Gloucester Street lay deep in dust. The Courthouse Green and the Palace Green spread tawny and trodden; the oaks and sycamores, and some mulberries that were not forest trees but had been planted by man, stood all crimson and russet and pale copper and yellow.

The sky hung quite cloudless and for all the dust the air was sweet. From the College of William and Mary to the Capitol they pursued the Duke of Gloucester Street. College and Church and Courthouse and Powder Horn and Capitol, and frame and brick dwellings with their gardens around them—and it was all very interesting but nothing to the High Street of Edinburgh. When they had seen the Capitol, which was of brick with a portico, they turned into Nicholson Street and so back to the Palace Green and northward a little to the Governor's Palace, that was likewise of brick and like a decent laird's house. When they had admired the grounds that were laid out with flower beds and arbors they moved south again past a wooden playhouse and across the Green to the very good church set among great trees and gravestones. The trees were colored, the town seemed asleep. They seated themselves upon some chance lumber piled by the gate that gave upon the Green and, resting, looked around them.

"The Governor is not at home," said Andrew with some dissatisfaction, "and the Houses of Parliament that they call Council and Burgesses do not meet till next month. The college is not open, and most of the gentry are out in the country. It's no the fashion anyhow to crowd."

"No, I cannot say it is crowded," said the minister of Thistlebrae dreamily.

"It's sma' to Edinburgh or Stirling." Jean Selkirk sighed.

Andrew spoke on a note of justification. "Aye, the towns are wee towns. But the country is so great it could toss Scotland like a ball!"

"I'm liking the country," said Robin. "I'm aye liking matters that are big and wide and sunny. I'm wanting now to see tobacco and the Indians.—Yon's a black man!"

All turned to see the slave go by.

"I do not like that," said John Selkirk. "I do not like men in slavery!"

"They are black men," answered his eldest son. "I did not like it at first either, Father. But you get used to it. By and large they're pretty kindly treated. Those that have been here long are baptized Christians, and they call the plantations that own them home."

"Will they be in New Virginia that we're thinking about?"

Andrew shook his head. "There'll not be there yet either the money or the leaf to buy them with. They that widen the borders of a country are mostly landless folk wanting land. No land, no Negroes!"

"Are there nae great folk in the frontier parts?"

"I'll not say none, Mother, but few. I'll not say no Negroes, but few. The farther west, the fewer of both. There's none yet, I'm thinking, in the Great Valley, which is also what they call New Virginia. There's few white folk at all there yet. The great are to come or to make themselves." With that young Andrew, who was long and strong of face, with a big nose, small keen gray eyes, and lean, close-fitting lips, looked away from Williamsburg and his family to the sun that was now hanging like a golden platter above golden trees to the west of the church tower. "The Valley's for those who have to strive. But gin we strive the gain's sure! So I say, all the land we can take at first, and more as we are able! Have the land, and at the last there'll be many a cleared field and Negroes to till and tend and gather—and a gude brick house and all—and 'Colonel' to a man's name.—It's lairds that we can be, founding the house of our name."

His gaze went beyond the golden trees. They yearned, they had their desire and passion, Andrew's eyes, moving like green, deep water under gray ice.

"I'll make no man a slave," said his father sternly. "Blackness of skin is naught."

The eldest son, still dreaming, made a movement with his hand. It said, "Time enough —"

The sun gave the logs upon which they were seated a pleasant glow and warmth. The colored trees seemed to them, lately from the sea and then from Scotland, inordinately bright. Leaves fell about them, each a wonder. Birds that they did not know flew overhead. A few persons passed on foot, then one or two on horseback, then a wagon drawn by oxen went by with a muffled sound through the dusty street. When it was gone there approached a party of six, afoot, seeing the town like themselves. Robin noticed them first. "Indians! Those are Indians!"

Andrew turned his head, glanced and nodded. "Young Wolf and Kill Buck and their relations from the village on the York, with a chief from across the river."

"They are peaceful?" asked his father.

"More peaceful than the dead. That's what they are in this region," answered Andrew. "Dead."

These Indians wore shirt and leggings, blankets, mocasins and necklaces. One had an English hat. They came by slowly, with state, speaking guttural words sparsely, but even the eye new to America might see that they were tamed. Passing, they stared at the group by the church wall and made some kind of greeting. Andrew answered it negligently, but John Selkirk with punctiliousness. "They are the first I've seen with my own eyes.—How strange they seem!—This is a strange world."

Robin's eyes were bright. "We'll see them not like that, but naked and strong, if we go up the river?"

Andrew made sober reply. "Yes, naked and strong enough. But Colonel Burke and all others I've talked with say that they are all at peace with white settlers, and are

like to stay so. There are treaties. And every year now sees more and more white men to make a stand if trouble should ever lift its head." He looked at his mother and sisters and his Aunt Kirstie, at his father and his young brothers; he was very responsible, was Andrew, and felt the weight of the destinies of his family. "I would not be advising us to become what they call pioneers if 'twas not so! And yet— There's the chance there for all the future, but there may be danger too. I don't want you to decide just on my saying, Father and Mother."

"Where there are chances there are dangers," answered Selkirk. "There were dangers in Scotland—chances there too, I dare say. I came out after the bird with a different wing.—I do not suppose folk would be going, as they say they are, into New Virginia, if there were excessive danger. What do you say, Jeannie?"

The leaves drifted down. In the distance a coach drawn by four horses entered Duke of Gloucester Street. The dust whirled up, folk passed, the smoky, purple, October light washed the flat land, the scattered houses and the painted trees. Jean Selkirk looked wistfully at the comfortable houses about. From a near-by garden came upon a puff of wind a pleasant clack of women's voices, women and children. It seemed safe and leal, the town. If there were but a manse here, a pleasant manse and a church, not of England and Erastian like the one by which they sat, but a true Presbyterian kirk—if John were minister, and never any more misunderstood! They might stay here and risk no more. But there was no kirk waiting for him. He was dreaming of building one, and she saw that he could not build it here. But he could begin anew, with people about him, in the wilderness. Light sat in his eyes when Andrew talked. And Andrew that was her eldest and had a grand head, he too wanted to go where he could build. She

sighed and said cheerfully, "When we've fared so far, faring a bit farther is not much. And none would be settling, I'm thinking, in that country if it was not middling safe—"

"Andrew says there are grand mountains there," said Kirstie.

Phemie asked, "Will we be having neighbors, Father?"

Andrew answered for him. "'Tis a town Colonel Burke wants to be beginning. He's got a score of folk already here and there in his Tract. We won't be so lonely as you think—only somebody's got to start it. Somebody had to start Edinburgh. It's got a future—New Virginia or the Shenando Country, or the Great Valley, for they call it all three." He craned his head past Phemie's shoulder, then got to his feet. "Here's good fortune! There's Colonel Burke himself walking this way!"

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CHAPTER III

RISING, he left his family and moved with his step both bold and sedate—"Andrew's step" they called it—to meet the on-coming gentleman. Meeting him, the two stood and talked for a moment, then came on to the group upon the Green, by the churchyard wall.

The Scots folk thus viewed Colonel Matthew Burke before they must move to greet him, and on the whole liked him, though with reservations for further acquaintance. Irish evidently—and that did not so much matter—but what if he were *Catholic*? Mrs. Selkirk, with widened eyes, whispered to her husband. The minister answered her, "It's all right, Jeannie. I asked Andrew. He's frae the north—Protestant."

But though he was from the north of Ireland and Protestant he seemed to have a good deal of the south in him, as indeed he had, his grandfather being from the Shannon. He was rather small and quick and lively, and then could turn dreaming, dark, romantic. Now he was full of quip and jest, and now he would go brooding, with his eyes upon the ground, save when he raised them, when he looked aslant and something old and deep came into the matter. But ordinarily he was just cheerful, quick and able. He had come to Virginia poor, then, inheriting some money, had remained and grown well-to-do and universally respected. Some little time before this autumn day he had secured a large grant of land in that part of the world beyond the Blue Ridge that was called New Virginia or the Shenando Country, or the Great Valley and was just opening up. Having it, the law required that he must provide

at least so many settlers. He or his agents must cultivate those who had the spirit of the pioneer, who longed for land and elbow room, who were depressed in low-lying Virginia for economic reasons, for social reasons, for religious reasons, for reasons of character and personal reasons—all manner of reasons that might yet leave the individual sturdy to face incidental privation and no coward before new dangers.

So his main interest this autumn lay in finding men who were willing or anxious to move afar, and to acquire land in that afar from Matthew Burke. The settler had his headright—fifty acres of land for himself; fifty, besides, for each male of his household, with a quit rent of an annual shilling for each fifty. He could go to New Virginia without troubling himself about such gentlemen as Colonel Matthew Burke, take up his lawful acreage and if he prospered purchase more. But he could not take it up in Burke's Tract, or Borden's Grant, or Beverley Manor, or my Lord Fairfax's land, and so on. And that meant that he couldn't pick and choose in the great, rolling, rich Valley floor, but must take the foothill back country. Better buy from the great men. So thought the settler, if he was of any substance, but often took leave also to think it onerous.

The great men thought it all right. Individual pioneering was full of danger and disadvantage, whereas a proprietor could do much for a settler, starting him, as it were, in a civilized fashion. Trouble and expenditure counted; the proprietor did not stand to make a fabulous amount. Of course he reserved from the grant his own estate of the best, at the same time providing himself with less fortunate neighbors, and at some future day the silver egg might prove to be golden. But the future was far ahead, and in the meantime he had his work and worries. So thought they all and so thought Matthew Burke.

He was looking for single men and for men with families, preferring the latter, so that they were still in their prime or had stout sons. At Ramsay's warehouse in September he had chance-spoken with young Selkirk who was expecting his parents and brothers and sisters on the *Prudence*. Hence all that followed. Now he advanced with his quick step and engaging smile to this knot of possible tenants or outright purchasers. He felt a genuine, romantic interest in them. He visualized the Great Valley, savannah and forest, and his hundred thousand at the upper end, near the headwaters of that James that poured into the ocean, and the cabins that were already building. To plant a country, to begin a town, fired his imagination. He had already a name for the town, so soon as it should begin its clustering,—not Burkeville or Burketon, but Donegal. Perhaps one day he would go and live there himself, he and his son Conan.

To the Irishman from Ulster a minister was a minister, whether or not an emigrant, coming out cheaply upon the *Prudence* and probably able to take only the fewest acres of Burke's Tract.

"Mr. Selkirk, I'm delighted to know you, sir!"

"I thank you, Colonel Burke."

"Mrs. Selkirk, let me welcome you to Virginia! Your servant, Miss Mackay! And all these fine, young people—"

They all liked him. In no time they were talking as cosily, thought Jean Selkirk, as though it were the manse, and Jessie would presently be bringing in the tea and scones. He had, it proved, a map of Virginia and a map of his Survey, folded small in his great pocket, and these he took out and with Andrew's help spread upon the withered turf at their feet and fastened them there with bits of rubble. All bent to look.

"Burke's Tract," he said. "And Virginia between the sea and it. This is the river James that goes looping and

winding and growing always narrower. It's so huge at the mouth that it's a long way before you can shoot an arrow across. Here are the mountains, the Blue Ridge, called that, I'm thinking, because in certain lights and weathers they turn like bluebells or the sky itself. On the other side lies the Shenando country, the Valley."

"How far from us, sitting here?"

"As the bird flies, maybe sixty leagues."

"A long way!"

"A big country, sir!"

"Where does the settled country end?"

"Why, there are few roads beyond Fredericksburgh on the Rappahannock and Colonel Byrd's settlement at the falls of the James. Few roads, but good horse paths, and a scattering of folk clean to the Blue Ridge. So it may be said to be settled to the eastern wall of the Great Valley. It's taken a hundred and thirty years to get so far." He ended with a kind of triumph. "But we move faster now! Each generation stands on the work of the generation before, and stands higher!"

"It seems that it is so," said the minister. "And now this hidden Great Valley begins to settle. West and west and always west! So we came maybe from Asia to the British Isles, and now farther—"

He had struck a note, descriptive and speculative, in Burke's nature. The Irishman straightened from his map, though he still kept the twig in his hand, now touching this point, now that.

"Governor Spotswood and his company saw it first in 1715—the Great Valley—though I have heard old folk speak of one Lederer and a party from Fort Henry as early as 1671. But we'll call His Excellency the discoverer. He had the true idea—check the French by moving first upon the great lakes that lie south of the river Saint Lawrence.

But Gad! the great lakes get farther and farther away! But he did view and take possession of, for the king, this Valley that's as great as many a kingdom in Europe. He stood on the top of the Blue Ridge and looked down upon it, the miles and miles and miles of it, unchecked north and south, but on the west ten leagues across maybe, walls of gray mountains high and long." He touched them with the stick upon the map. "Endless Mountains, we call them, and also, following the Indians, Alleghi or Alleghany. Some day we'll top those mountains too, and see what's beyond *them*! But now it's the Valley, and that's great enough for a while!"

"And folk are moving from old Virginia, from the borders of the sea and the tidal rivers?"

"Ah, it goes on from here too," said Burke. "The active and pining and landless and dispossessed. But not so much as you would think! All Virginia below the falls is used to tobacco and ships. We may have tobacco after a while in the Valley, though it's more like in my opinion to be wheat and maize, and cattle and horses, for there's a deal of grass. But we can't have ships. And as for the people between the falls and the Blue Ridge they're too thinly set as yet and too well content to think of moving. No! The Valley would have to wait a good while to get any number of removers from planted Virginia. And England herself is not sending any great number over in these years. No, nor Scotland. It's unusual nowadays to see a shipful such as the *Prudence* brought."

"Then your Valley will be wilderness still —"

"No, 'twill not! Scotland and North England through Ulster, after a hundred years of abiding there — and with some of ancient Ulster herself — and landing not here but north of us in Pennsylvania. They've been coming now for some years. They think they're going to settle in that

colony, and then they find that it too is planted, and land not so simple a thing to lay hold of as they thought. They press to the west — this way — and then they hear of New Virginia. There's open country and only the Potomac between them and it. No such mountains to outface and daunt them as are met down here! So south they come, across the Potomac, into the Valley, have been coming in numbers for five or six years. I don't see any end to it. They're a vigorous, dauntless lot!"

"Then we'll meet Scotch names and faces, Highland and Lowland. And they'll be Presbyterian —"

"Most of them. But there's another lot that we must not be forgetting," said the Colonel. "Good, strong, sober, religious folk too! And they are Germans from the Rhine, harried from home by King Louis. Lutherans — but Luther and Calvin, in Heaven, may be calling each other 'brother', don't you think, sir? They also are coming down from Pennsylvania. Thrifty, determined folk, with their own ways! But they're stopping in the lower part of the Valley, north of the mountains called Massanutten. It runs almost north and south, you see, and the lower end is north, and the upper end is south. The Irish — that is, the Irish who are Scotch — are taking the north middle and the middle, the south middle and the south. There are a few North England folk, and a handful of Huguenots. In the middle valley John Lewis is king at the moment — he and James Patton. They brought with them a number of Ulster folk, and are taking up land in Beverley's and Borden's grants. My grant lies southward of theirs, resting upon the James."

"The Church of England?"

"In possession, sir, just as in Ireland. Established. Presbyterian, Lutheran, French Calvinist, Quaker, Catholic and all are tithed in Virginia, and are under disabilities beside. All are Dissenters and Schismatics. But you'll find

it easy in the Valley afar — far and away easier than this side the Blue Ridge This side's England and the Church of England. The other side is as I have been saying. The Valley will be tithed, but there won't, I'm thinking, be other interference. There can't be, seeing that it is so far, and the folk there just one way of thinking. You'll be having your kirk presently. I'll make it my concern that the settlers in Burke's Tract shall know of you and your gifts which, it is not hard to see, sir, are unusual."

"You must not think that of me," answered Selkirk. "I am a soul that has fought and crept and been helped on its way, and I would serve as I am shown. There is another thing, sir, that I would bring up now rather than later. I would know about the Indians."

"The Indians?" Colonel Matthew Burke again straightened from the map and prepared to take up a frequent explanation. Every one into whose head the Great Valley had entered must know about the Indians. Very soon in the conversation they asked, "What about the Indians?" So now this Scots minister and his family had come to it.

"Well, Indians are Indians, Mr. Selkirk! God made them and they have certain virtues. For the rest, when it comes to a fight and the ways of it before and after, they are much, I'm thinking, like the Caledonians and Picts and sons of Erin before the time of the blessed saints Patrick and Colum! But in the first place you're to understand that the authorities do everything possible to make and keep peace with them, and that we've had peace for a score of years."

"What I'm meaning," said Selkirk, "is, if I and mine go to this new country, will we put them forth, or agree with others putting them forth, from lands that they've held God knows how long, and that make their home upon earth? In my life, Colonel Burke, I've seen a deal of putting forth

of the helpless by the powerful. I would not cross over into that camp!"

"Ah?" said the Irishman. "And that's the way you're feeling about it? And of course it does you honor! Then I'm happy to tell you, Mr. Selkirk, that the Great Valley, from the first sight of it a score or more years ago until now, is not dwelt in by Indians. When they left it and why they left it, God knows, for it is a fair land. It's likely it was once pretty populous with them—as they count populousness, which is nothing like *our* populousness. Long ago they cleared a considerable portion of the floor of it and left it to the high grass and the buffalo and elk. There must have been villages and maize fields. There are many and beautiful rivers, and they love rivers. But they're hunters, and at last they eat up the forest around them, and then they move. Or there is a war and they are killed off. Or they move just restlessly, anyhow, like the waters of the sea. Whatever the reason, they're clean gone, and with them, or before them, the buffalo and elk. Hunting parties or just rovers for curiosity come back into it at times, and it is true that the war bands of the Catawbias and Delawares, who are perpetual enemies of one another, have a warpath through it which they use when they are in active controversy. But that's all. The true Indian country is now back toward the Ohio, behind those Alleghi or Alleghany Mountains that make the western boundary of the Valley. No, sir! Indians may make a sentimental claim to all of Virginia, or all of the continent, for that matter. But as they don't choose to live in the Great Valley, who's to gainsay others from doing so? It's half as big as all Ireland. No, no! There's a treaty in progress with the Sachems whereby it's formally recognized as being within the English bounds. In the meantime the acres that you take have not man, woman, child nor house upon them, nor

any red folk near them. Faith and indeed, sir, your conscience may be at ease!"

John Selkirk sighed. "There are so many things we do not know — where is the right and where is the wrong! We want to keep clean hands and the fire of kindness in the heart. Well, sir, we must think a little, but it is like enough that we shall go to this Valley."

Andrew, who had been brooding upon the westering sun, now spoke. "I want them to know, sir, that life there may be terribly simple and back to our forefathers' ways; I want them to know that there are trees to fell and cabins to build and fields to plant and no servants nor workmen to hire — not at first, at any rate. Only one family helping another as it may, and that the families are far apart, and that there are wild beasts, and it may seem fearsomely lonely and solitary. I don't want them to go ignorant of dangers."

Burke answered with firmness. "There is no more danger, as there are no more work and hardship, than discoverers and planters of new countries have found in all lands and ages."

Said Kirstie Mackay, "Danger and wark are wherever grass grows and water flows."

"And that's true, too," answered Burke. "Moreover, I can see by looking at you all that you're not the kind that flinches. You'll stand by. And in this world, and perhaps in any other, it's nothing venture, nothing have!"

The minister bent over Burke's Tract. "We are, as you may guess, anything but rich, sir. But neither are Andrew and I altogether penniless. What is asked for the land, and just where would we be buying?"

The sun was not far from the horizon and the flood of splendid light falling through the splendid trees shook gold and red, amber and violet over the churchyard and the

palace green and Duke of Gloucester Street. In the churchyard Elizabeth and Tam were playing among the grave-stones; silently and elfishly, for minister's children at least must not be romping in kirk shadow. But it was great pleasure, spurning the red and gold leaves under foot, and hiding and spying behind cedars and behind gravestones like houses, with name and arms and words of comfort cut in the flat roof. The girl was as strong and quick as the boy; both could leap and twist and turn, and do all quietly, with soundless laughter. Their gray eyes glinted, they smiled widely, playing about like elves behind the group of anxious elders who must determine what life would be.

"This is my house," said Tam. "You're Indians coming against it. This is a gun."

"Eh! Look at the bonny red leaf —"

"Now we're on what they call the warpath. I'm after you!"

"Eh, I'm gone! I've jumped into the river and over the moon —"

"Elizabeth! Tam!" called their mother. They went to the gate and the pile of lumber, and shook hands as they were bidden with Colonel Matthew Burke. He had folded his map and risen to depart, having, he saw, landed this group of settlers; or if they had landed themselves — or if their stars or the saints (he was half-Catholic inside) or Providence had landed them — it came to the same thing. He felt genially, paternally, toward them. He believed that they were doing the best thing possible for themselves, and from his own point of view they were quite emphatically the desirable sort. They, with others already in his Tract or in prospect, would make a good nucleus for Donegal. Already he saw Donegal a city, and somewhere in the market place, or before the church — oh, rather far in the future, perhaps! — a great bronze figure of the founder, one

Matthew Burke. The Selkirks stood also. He put out his hand and grasped the minister's.

"Mr. Selkirk, your son knows where to find me if you would pursue the matter. It is my hope that we may meet often again. Who knows? One day I may remove entirely from this part of the world to that. I may live in Burke's Tract—on the edge of Donegal—and we be neighbors. I have a son about the age of that lad." He looked at Tam. "Conan Burke. He pesters me to go dwell in the Valley. My wife is dead—God rest her soul! Conan and I are all."

He made his farewell to the women. They all liked him. He could make felt, when he wished to, that romance and magic that gave content to his world. So it was good-by for a little while, and he went off, walking lightly, with his cane and ruffles and wine-hued broadcloth down Duke of Gloucester Street, toward the Raleigh Tavern.

The immigrants from Scotland, too, must start in the other direction for the humbler hostelry that made their momentary home. Andrew leading, they crossed the wide thoroughfare, and presently found themselves in a parallel street, narrow, quiet, and grass-grown. Here were set small dwelling houses of frame, all embowered in tinted trees.

"Why are you looking so closely at that house?" asked Phemie of Andrew. "Do you know them who live there?"

As she spoke, a young woman, turning a corner, came into Francis Street and towards this very house. She had on a straw bonnet and a dress of dark blue stuff with a white kerchief knotted at her bosom. Her cheeks were pink, her eyes were bright, she had a sonsie, friendly air. When she saw Andrew Selkirk and his family with him her color deepened.

Walking so they must meet her, and did so, just at the

gate of the small house, where an oak waved a great torch. Andrew put out his hand.

"Mother, Father, Aunt Kirstie, Phemie, Robin, Tam, Bess, this is Miss Nancy Milliken."

Miss Nancy Milliken curtsied and said in a cheerful and honey voice that she was glad to see Mr. Andrew Selkirk's family. Would they not come in? Her father would be home from his shop. But no, they could not, the warm dusk beginning to possess the earth. So they said good-by to Miss Milliken who had a pleasant, drawing way with her.

And going on up Francis Street, Kirstie Mackay, who now and then experienced second sight, whispered to her sister, "I am seeing her and Andra in a wagon together and a boat together and a house together."

Jean Selkirk nodded. "So am I! Aweel, I've been looking for it!"

CHAPTER IV

THE river James, in the April weather, roared and lashed like a host of tawny lions around and between the multitude of islets and boulders that stood between its upper life and its tidal, ship-bearing life. These were the falls—to the first English adventurers in this land the falls of the Far West. But now the Far West had moved threescore leagues to the Blue Ridge, with a definitely known Far, Far West beyond that. The first Englishmen had conceived of the South Sea as being but a few days' march beyond the falls. Now God knew how far was the South Sea, the Pacific! There was the Indian country beyond the Alleghany, and the great river Ohio, and the Great Lakes, with the French penetration.

The wagon, stout-bodied and wheeled and tongued, had hoops that rising from its sides gave room for a man to stand upright upon the wagon floor beneath. Over the hoops, stretched taut, went grayish-white canvas. Within the interior thus formed were to travel the gear of the Selkirks and those Selkirks themselves who were not at the moment walking. The horses were two large and strong grays, Bob and Dick; the driver and guide a wiry, black-haired, black-eyed individual named Stephen Trabue. The season was spring, the winter having been spent by the Selkirk family in Williamsburgh. A sloop, entered at Jamestown, had brought them to this place.

Matthew Burke had an agent in the infant town of Richmond, just laid out the least distance below the falls. Richmond or "Colonel Byrd's Town." The agent explained to John Selkirk that Colonel Byrd fancied the sit-

uation like that of Richmond on the Thames. Selkirk gazed bewildered at the scratched-upon pine and oak land and the faint drift of small houses, with a big warehouse down at the river, and a weather-beaten landing. "I look back," he thought, "upon fledgling days! So it may have been with London herself." Aloud he said, "They showed us from the sloop a place called World's End. But here we are beyond World's End, and yet living and striving! It may be always so."

"I have looked out for you," said the agent. "Here, in the Byrd Tavern, you can make out over to-day and to-morrow. Then I shall have for you Stephen Trabue's wagon and horses, with Trabue himself for driver. There isn't a better! The weather's clearing and the roads are drying. I'll see you started Thursday morning. You'd better let me see the list of what you're taking. We know pretty well here what's needed for new parts."

A little later he checked it off over the tavern table. "Muskets, one apiece for men and boys, and two to spare — that's good provision! Bullets and powder, all you can carry. You can always get lead and powder from traders. Three axes, two saws, hatchets, two spades, two hoes, a ploughshare, a box of small tools, a bag of nails — Mr. Selkirk, you're a Croesus to many! One big and two small iron pots, a kettle, three pans, three pails, a mortar and pestle, a skillet, pewter plates and dishes, knives, forks, spoons — a chest of clothing — bedding, a feather bed, sheets, blankets — a spinning wheel — the Bible and other books, with paper for letters and sermons — a box of candles, a bushel of salt, a quantity of seed corn, a small box of medicines, a lancet, a small chest with various matters — my dear sir!"

"Is it too much? Andrew talked with Colonel Burke and —"

"Colonel Burke is a gentleman of big ideas! When *he* goes to live in the Valley he'll doubtless be taking a train of wagons —"

"But we have only one. We could not afford another. And," said the minister painfully, "I would not overload the beasts who draw. Yet what we brought from Scotland we would not willingly leave behind. And we were told that we should not have less than the rest —"

"Many have much less. Little by little they trade for what they need. And it's astonishing," quoth the agent, who was a man of observation and some schooling, "how needs go down in the wild country away from the taste of towns. Where is all this plenishing?"

"At the landing," said Andrew. "We've heaped it there under a canvas and left my brother Robin to watch it."

"As to that," said the other, "it is safe enough without him. We're a main honest lot in Richmond now, whatever we may become! All that gear, and nine of you!" He thoughtfully tapped the table. "Well, we had better see Stephen Trabue before we determine. Of course, whatever has to be left you can sell here. Stephen will be on hand in the morning."

The tavern proved rude and somewhat crowded with backwoodsmen and traders and builders and masters of small ships and two or three prosperous young planters who dressed finely, drank wine and used choice oaths. One of these had extraordinary personal beauty. Kirstie Mackay and Phemie watched his coming and going from where they sat, holding hands, on a bench beneath a giant sycamore.

"Oh, so bonny is he, Aunt Kirstie!" breathed Phemie. "I have never seen sic a prince!"

"He is like Tam Lin in the ballad," said Kirstie.

Andrew's young wife, that was Nancy Milliken, came and

sat beside them. "Have you noted young master there? Is he not sugar and spice and lace and a diamond?"

The beautiful one came out of the tavern. A negro boy brought up a horse, as beautiful in its way as the man. The latter sprang to saddle, backed his steed from the door, waved to some one within and cantered away beneath the spring trees.

The women stared after him. "Ah, he's a galliard!"

Nancy, having been born in this Colony, played always the part of good-natured guide to its wonders. "I do not know who he may be—a guest, I reckon, at Westover down the river. Was he not a pretty fellow?—Well, it's the last of his kind we'll be seeing!"

Kirstie and Phemie liked very well their niece and sister-in-law, but there were points at which the women pricked one another and started back. "For all I hear, there are gude Scots and Irish, aye, and English gentlemen going to the Valley!"

"Oh, aye, gude as any!" said the other with an effect of mimicry. "But they're mostly grooms of poverty. And at least while we're young we'll see no more of mechlin and fine cloth, tie wigs and golden buckles. Heigh-ho!"

"Why did you marry Andrew? I'll not give Andrew's looks for his!"

Nancy Milliken Selkirk looked sideways at Miss Mackay and burst into her very happy laugh. "No, nor I, or should I be here? So we won't quarrel about him. But he's a pretty sprig, and now and again you may hear me sigh for Sunday mornings in Bruton Church, or a Birthday Ball and all the fine feathers flocking to the Palace! Not," said Nancy with great honesty, "that I ever danced at the Governor's ball. My enjoyment was in watching. But, Lord! you can take much joy in that. But of course I like Andrew—and Andrew's people.—better than any one in

Williamsburgh, except my own folk that I shall often cry for! Cry and laugh! That's life. Laugh and cry and laugh again. Oh, yes, I have followed Andrew!"

Kirstie said warmly, "You are to be honored, Nancy, and I make no question of your love and faith. You see, Thistlebrae was no wilderness either, and the laird was always having fine company and bringing them to kirk, aye, and to the manse. He was a fine man, our laird, and stood always, in doctrine and interpretation, by my brother. And I have kin in Edinburgh and have seen a deal of fineness and pageantry and gay dressing." Her lips closed, but what her air continued to say was, "We, too, give up certain matters."

Phemie spoke. "I will aye remember Edinburgh and Stirling and Dumfermline that I went to with my father. But Bess will forget, or it will be to her just an auld fairy tale, rinning in her ears."

"Aye, it's Bess and Tam and maybe Robin that will be all of the new land, little or nane of the old! But, ah," said Kirstie, "the Lord is King of all lands! Him and his saints will be here as well as there."

A well-dressed woman, the young side of middle life, stepping from the tavern, saw the three beneath the sycamore and came across to them.

"Good day! A fine day! Have you marked the black-birds in the tree?"

"Aye. How they chatter!"

They made room upon the bench for the newcomer. "I am Mrs. Bohun. I know your names—the landlord told me. Young Mrs. Selkirk, Miss Mackay, and quite young Miss Selkirk—all bound with your menfolk for Matthew Burke's Great Valley. I trust in God you'll like it!"

Nancy, as the married woman, made answer. "Why, ma'am, our minds are made up to like it."

"Be sure you get your minds to persuade your hearts! For me, I'd as soon go to the moon. *This* is rude enough!" She looked around her with a certain disconsolateness which promptly turned itself into determined cheer.

"You live or are going to live here, ma'am?" asked Nancy.

"That is the state of it. One day," said the lady firmly, "there will be at this spot a city. There will be an infinity of dwelling houses, mansions no less, and inns that would die of laughter at this one. There will be churches — stone ones with spires — places of learning, shops in rows, a market place if not two of them, Assembly Rooms, coffee-houses, a theater and a polite society. So says Colonel Byrd, and I believe him. But you poor things — you are going to the moon!"

The three sat depressed. It seemed of a sudden true. They were going to the moon and could never get back. Silence fell drearily under the sycamore. Mrs. Bohun glanced aside at the journeyers-on with sharp black eyes set either side a strong beak of a nose. The lips beneath the nose expanded into a grin that was not without sweetness. She clapped her hands together.

"There! I meant to be very friendly, for I looked out of window and I said to myself, 'Yonder are three women who are going in Stephen Trabue's wagon and then on horseback or God knows how to the back of the world!' And I am fretting because the falls here are a lonesome sound and I may die before there is much Richmond to look at! So I said to myself that I would come out and be sympathetic. And I've but made you look more wistful and far away than ever!" She stood up.

"No, no! Don't go, ma'am —"

But she had stayed her time and must go find her husband and decide for the fiftieth time whether to take three or five

Richmond lots. Moreover here, approaching the sycamore, came the minister, the head of this family; with him the youngest girl, and in his hand an evident Bible. She said good-by. "In case I don't see you to-morrow, I'm sure I wish you happy! Nobody can tell. Sixty years ago wolves howled around whatever cabins were here and redskins massacred white folk on this very spot. And now they're all pushed back beyond the mountains, and they do say that is what the Governor and Council have in mind when they so further the taking up lands past the Blue Ridge. You folk in the Great Valley, being a strong kind, will hold the redskins back from the settlements this side the Ridge. We're safe here now, and in another sixty years you'll be safe there. And the folk hereabouts weren't all killed in that time. A number of them lived and got their reward. I wish you all good fortune! Matthew Burke told me that you were the salt of the earth."

She departed, the really good-natured lady. The minister came up to the tree. "Let us go for evening prayer to the river bank where it is still and retired."

His wife joined them. The three sons came also. They moved from the vicinity of the tavern and the small, small beginnings of a city. The sun was growing low, they heard the river tumbling among rocks and elfin islets all April-green and tuneful. It had been a dry winter; the river ran swollen by far-away snows, but nothing like so swollen as it could run and depart from its banks. They found a green point that ran toward the fairy isles. All manner of beauteous trees seemed about them, there were stones upon which they might sit, and a perfect solitude. Here they grouped themselves, the eight from Scotland and the young wife born in Williamsburgh. They were away from the road of sorts, they were away from Richmond that was smaller than any hamlet they knew at home. Wild flowers

bloomed, willows dipped into the chanting water, overhead a gray and white bird sang many songs.

"What is it?" whispered Elizabeth, and Nancy answered her, "A mocking bird."

The minister opened the Book. "Read," said Kirstie, sitting under a white, flowering tree, "read the Twenty-third Psalm, Brother."

CHAPTER V

“**P**UT it all in!” said Stephen Trabue. “The wagon’s big and the nine of you look strong. You can ride and tie, and in bad places all be out at once and do some shoving. At the worst we can unpack and carry the goods across. I’ll trust Bob and Dick to get the *wagon* over any stream or out of any mudhole. With luck it isn’t more than two weeks between us and Burke’s Fort. It would be a pity to leave any of your things!”

The Selkirks, agreeing, took a liking to him and to Bob and Dick and to Anthony, Stephen’s dog, and to the wagon that seemed capaciously to smile upon them. They were tired of the tavern that was a noisy and smoky place; the trip upon the sloop up the roughened river from Jamestown had been none so pleasant; the winter in Williamsburgh had had its excitements and alleviations, notably the acquiring of Nancy Milliken, but with all that there had been discomfort in the broken-down house on the Jamestown road, and Mrs. Selkirk had had an illness, and there was always a sense of aliency and impermanence. If Williamsburgh had been going to be home they would have set about it differently. But it was not home; they were only waiting, waiting, with an increasing longing for home. Sometimes it was homesickness for Scotland, for the old gray manse in old, gray, one-long-street Thistlebrae, for friends and neighbors, for the old gray kirk, the kirkyard, the congregation, even for the side-taking! Sometimes it was bitter, this yearning, and brought the salt tears. Sometimes it was longing to be setting about the making of home, there where they were to find and make it, where the mountains rose bluely and the

river James ran narrow and clear; longing to drive their adventure farther, to send their shaft home. With the coming of spring and the rising of the heart to meet it, the latter grew the main feeling. Four hundred acres of land, a house to build, a kirk, new folk to know, likings established, and likings growing to loving. Home in Virginia, home!

So they obeyed Stephen Trabue and their own desires and placed in the wagon all that they had brought and bought. Trabue helped and a man or two from the loiterers about the tavern; the minister and his eldest son were strong men; their chests and casks and bundles were soon in, the feather bed so placed that it could be rested upon. The agent still looked after them in so far as he stood and encouraged and predicted fine weather and a drying road,—altogether an Arcadian progression with Happiness at the end. Dogs, chickens, and a fine sow with her litter attended. The tavern keeper and his wife and those of the tavern guests who were astir came out to watch the family for the Great Valley take the road.

Mrs. Bohun appeared. "Good luck to you all, and if ever you make east again—which I'm doubting, but if ever you do—remember that I've a house here and come tell me your adventures. You'll be sure to have had them!"

The horses stood hitched to the wagon. They were big and strong and had each a bell. Stephen Trabue, wiping his mouth after a draught of ale, swung himself into his seat. He wore a squirrel-skin cap and a nondescript coat and shirt and breeches, hose and shoes. He had his own musket lying along the floor at his feet, and his shot pouch and powderhorn and bag and a knife and a bundle tied in a cloth with other matters. Anthony his dog looked at him intelligently and prepared to accompany.

The Selkirks held together for a moment before dividing

into riders and walkers. They made a company : the father, Andrew, Robin and Tam ; the mother, Christiana Mackay, Nancy, Euphemia and Elizabeth. The two men, the youth Robin and the lad Tam were dressed in kersey coats and waistcoats with great flapped pockets and cuffs and horn buttons, in breeches buckled at the knee, brass buckles for the two younger, plain silver for the minister and his eldest, in thick stockings and stout, coarse shoes such as they walk in, in the country. Their linen was good though not fine, their hats had fairly broad brims and were uncocked. John Selkirk wore a plain wig, but the others their own hair. All had cut from the abundant young trees by the river staves to walk with, thus showing that they were not yet mountaineers. The women had full skirts though without hoops, coming a little above the ankle, and over these bodice and gown, the latter drawn back at the sides to show the skirt. They wore kerchiefs, fastened at the bosom with an old gold or silver brooch. Mrs. Selkirk and her sister had linen caps tied beneath their chins, but Nancy and Euphemia straw hats. The child Elizabeth wore a white kerchief drawn over her hanging, brown-gold hair, but for the rest was dressed like her elders, as Tam was clothed like the men. All wore stockings of their own knitting and stout, low-cut shoes. Their clothes were plain but good ; they had in the wagon beneath its white cover, as much as folk of such moderate circumstances could expect to take with them upon a long march into difficult, unknown country. In a belt beneath his waistcoat the minister carried a dozen gold pieces and in a wallet a doubloon, several half pistoles, three or four Spanish pieces of eight or dollars and a few shillings and pence. Andrew had three guineas, two doubloons and a louis d'or. This money, the goods stored in the wagon and the clothes they wore made every whit of their worldly wealth. It might seem that they were poor enough, a dis-

senting minister and his family gypsying it to a distant and unsettled country. Their clothes, plain and dark as they were, would be darker yet, mired and torn, in much less than the month that might be granted them to reach their goal. That gear in the wagon might be diminished by all manner of accidents; certainly what money they had in pocket might be trusted to lessen. By the time they were across the Blue Ridge they might have little more than they stood in, and that damaged. Yet if they could reach it they possessed four hundred acres of rich Valley land. Land, land! You could always begin if you had land. There went with them also invisibles and intangibles, so perhaps they were not so poor after all.

They all stood a moment together before dividing into those who would ride the first stage and those who would walk. The minister looked at his flock here, at the white wagon, the Richmond ordinary and the folk about, the raw fields that were the town, at the river, the forest, the sky. He lifted his hands. "Let us pray!" he said. "O Thou Life that we call God, why need we ask that Thou shouldst go with us? Where we are, there Thou art. But Consciousness of that Great Fact—O God, O Life, O All in All, we praying with Thee and Thee with us do wish and will that Consciousness! Amen!"

Stephen Trabue had taken off his squirrel-skin cap, others before the tavern removed their hats, the women present bowed their heads. A wave of good will like the breeze of morning seemed to play around and through all hearts; there occurred, it almost seemed, a heightening of the early sunshine. So Mrs. Selkirk, Kirstie, Nancy and Phemie took their places in the wagon. To her delight Elizabeth was given for this first stage the seat beside the wagoner. Trabue shook the reins. "Get up, Bob! Get up, Dick!" The wagon moved, those afoot began to trudge. The tavern

and all Richmond cheered the Great Valley. A fringe of pine trees came between the migrants and the ordinary. Immediately they were out of town limits and began to climb a hill. The road was innocent of all grading. It was merely "cleared." It went up a hill and over it, and all Richmond vanished.

The heavy wheels went round; the springless wagon proceeded with its lading, the two big horses, Stephen Trabue, his squirrel-skin cap and long whip, proceeded most slowly, most deliberately, as though they would all have time to think where they were going. They looked down upon the river, its green multitude of islets, and the water in spate between. It was early, the violet mist of spring clung to the farther shore that was forest in its hundreds of leagues. Forest lay also ahead, but to their right, close along the narrow, narrow road, stretched ploughed fields.

"Colonel Byrd has a power of land hereabouts," said Trabue, in answer to the minister's question. "Yes, tobacco. They're just setting out. See the Negroes over there?"

The child Elizabeth gazed, across Trabue, at the wide, rolling fields and at a score of black and brown men stooped to the earth, or rising, moving, and once more stooped. As was her wont she talked to herself, without words. "Negroes. From Africa on the great map. Slaves. There are slaves in the Bible, but father does not like it. I saw a little girl slave in Williamsburgh. I shouldn't like it. If I had one I'd set her free."

The ground hid the gang putting out tobacco. She turned her eyes again to the wonderful river, still barred with the magic isles, some large enough to allow for a hut, had there been any to build it, there among the trees; others with only room for a solitary tree or flowering bush; others again mere rock without soil, washed over too often by the glassy or moiled water. But altogether it was a fairy world, and

she saw it so and placed an elf on every islet. There was one, larger than the others, with a dozen tall trees and as many lower ones and these last made a mist of purple-rose and white. The water went around it with a smooth glide; just overhead in the blue hung a morning cloud like the finest white wool. The child whispered to herself, "That is belonging to the 'Queen of fair Elfland' that Thomas the Rhymer rode with,

" ' Her skirt was o' the grass-green silk,
Her mantle o' the velvet fine,
At ilka tett of her horse's mane
Hung fifty siller bells and nine. . . .

" ' Oh, they rade on and they rade on —' "

Stephen Trabue had quitted his seat and was walking beside the horses. The minister quickened his step and walked with him. Carrying his hat in his hand he raised his pleased face to the pine tops far above. "If it's all like this 'twill be sweet enough!"

Trabue smiled. "Oh, we'll have our troubles!" and fell to whistling.

"That's a French air," said the minister whose fondness for song other than the kirk singing had been among the bones of contention. "I heard it from a French prisoner of the '15 who escaped and I by chance found his hiding place among the hills. He said it was old, and made the rain less wet and the wind less cold."

"It is French," answered Trabue. "My parents were French. They came over seas in the *Colombe* from La Rochelle, with M. PrevotEAU the minister and others, forty years ago. Members of the Reformed Religion, fleeing from persecution. What they call Huguenots."

"Ah!" said John Selkirk cordially. "I know and esteem them!"

The other resumed his whistling and the old French air wandered along the Virginia road. The Scot continued in meditation. At last he said, "The dissenting English who sailed by way of Holland to New England, the Catholics who, they thought, were something oppressed in England and came to Maryland, the Quakers whom Penn brought, the Moravians of whom one was telling me, the Ulster Presbyterians whom we hope to join in this Shenando country to which we go, and Anabaptists too, they say, and others—and Jews no doubt also—we have all felt the same. A new land where we might breathe liberty. Disabilities and restrictions yet for a time, maybe, but not persecution. An air in which the soul may *speak* and fear no dungeon—"

Trabue nodded. "Aye, that was the way of it with the Sieur de la Muce and the Sieur de Richebourg and Monsieur de Joux our minister, and with Fontaine and Duval and Dupuy and all the others."

He walked on, not ploddingly, but quick and light of step. "We had to flee as best we could from France. All the stories I used to hear when I was a little child—! It was a fearsome persecution. Fearsome and hateful!"

"All persecution is hateful."

The child seated above them, listening almost unawares whilst all her senses seemed for this wonder road, caught the statement from her father and it ran through her mind and well nigh upon her lips, as thus, "All persecution is hateful. So it is. All persecution is hateful. So it is." She greatly loved her father and often took from him words that in this way went around and around in her head and, more often than one would think, were fairly understood. Then she would drop them into that great, quiet unseen space

where such things are stored, and let her attention go elsewhere. So it was now. The road had great attractions. The pines gave way to all manner of forest, pines and oaks and everything else, and then to low ground and wide tangles through which streams meandered. The wagon splashed across these, the minister taking Elizabeth's seat and holding her, standing, before him, while Andrew, Robin and Tam, removing shoes and stockings, waded. Tam would not put them on again; he liked it barefoot. They saw fish in the streams; birds that Trabue named to them flew from side to side; white stars of the dogwood, white mist of the wild plum, pink mist of the Judas tree delighted; deer moved away from human neighborhood, a fox crossed the road. They came again upon firmer ground, but now they had passed all the cultivated fields. All was forest. Now and again from rising ground they saw the river, but such were its windings and returns upon itself that the road soon gave up any attempt at keeping company. As for the road, it was a makeshift. The wagon took up almost its width, the walkers came on behind or were pressed into the unfenced wilderness to either hand, and stumps and stones were left within its bed. At long intervals they passed a vague clearing and a log house, or they met or overtook human beings. Said the minister cheerfully, "I'm sure it's not a lonely way at all!"

"It'll be lonelier farther on. We're yet," said Trabue, "in the crowded land."

Tam, who was older than his years and had humor, broke into a laugh. "Oh, the sair crowding! A man gets so knocked about!"

Time and the way went on. The sun rode high. Now the men rested, riding in the wagon, and the women walked. At first they talked and laughed together, finding the freedom after their jolting, close quarters agreeable. But with

the up and down and the midday warmth and hum and perfume, and the coming up with the wagon and seeing it go ahead, and coming up again, and the passing time, they at last fell silent, each moving in her own picture of the past, the present and the future. Only the eleven-year-old Elizabeth murmured on to herself, or cried out at bird and beast and flower. The forest had wild blossoms and wild creatures that maddened her; the tall trees she thought touched Heaven; she saw a fairy in brown and white seated on a bough that trailed in a stream. It was paradise to take off shoes and stockings, lift skirt and go through that water. She was not tired at all, only a little hungry, when they made out before them through the trees two or three log cabins and one of them with a swinging sign.

"Durden's town," quoth Trabue. "We'll have dinner here and a rest. Then about sunset we'll strike John Smith's house for supper and the night. To-morrow we'll leave this main road that goes on north by west to Orange Court-house, and take the new way up river. There won't be so much travel on that road, no, by no means so much! There's a handful of settlers, but they're a long ways apart."

"Then after to-morrow we shall be in the true wilderness?"

"Why, the truest, true wilderness," answered Trabue, "won't begin till you leave me at Burke's Fort. But in two or three days it will be true enough to serve."

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CHAPTER VI

THE mudhole proved deeper than Trabue had thought. The wagon stuck fast. Bob and Dick strained, Trabue encouraging; Anthony circled anxiously. The human occupants of the wagon were already out, pressed among the trees to the side of the road-no-road. It was afternoon, six days from Richmond, and it had rained since morning. This was the fourth great mudhole.

At last Trabue said, "Nothing for it but unload!" and came around to help. They got the cases, casks, bags and bundles out. Bob and Dick strained like Hercules; the four men and Tam pushed and lifted. The wheels rose and heavily moved; the wagon got through. "There!" said Stephen Trabue. "I've heard of a mudhole that buried a coach and four horses, but I've never seen it! Everything has something that can serve as a bottom."

They put back the lading. The women took their places under the dripping cover, the whole began to move. The road being little wider than a bridle path, wet branches struck against the canvas and made it wetter. The wind from southing rose to a banshee wail. Though they were now in May the air was grown shiveringly chill. The wheels turned heavily on the heavy track. They went a mile and sank in the fifth mudhole. Again they unloaded and pulled and pushed through. When this was done it was none so far from sunset, if there were indeed a sun behind that leaden roof that pressed upon the forest and the "road" and themselves. They proceeded half a mile, and finding a hill facing them with an outcropping of cliff, a small stream,

a thicket of pine and cedar, and a broken, open space where the wagon could turn out, they made camp.

Tam and Elizabeth, gathering the wood, were fortunate to find, overhung and kept dry by a ledge of rock, a litter of broken branches and cones. This they brought to the circle of stones placed by Andrew and Robin. Then dried leaves and moss from another seam, then flint and steel and the dropping spark and the thin, thin curl of smoke; then fire and all its comfort. They piled other branches, making a considerable and heartening blaze. Trabue, who had freed Bob and Dick from harness, given them water and a little grain from a bag that he carried and then turned them loose to graze, came to the flaming hearth. "I've known a time hereabouts when, colder and wetter than we are now, we yet wouldn't have dared make a fire like that! But though sometimes we see Indians they aren't in war parties any longer — not this side of the mountains."

"Is it too great?" asked the minister. "We seem since yesterday to have left all human life behind."

"Aye, pretty well. No, it's all right," answered Trabue and cast another bough upon the fire.

It blazed up strongly, with a great, singing sound. They all, with Anthony, pressed around it. Their wet clothing began to steam and color to come into wan faces. The place they had chosen was sheltered from wind and rain by a roof-like projection of the cliff. Trabue and Andrew put stones by the fire that quickly dried and made seats. "It's none so bad!" said Jean Selkirk cheerfully. They were Scotch and hardy; behind them, in their line, shepherds and cotters and artisans and rieurs as well as ministers and lawyers and a poet, and at a misty distance a chieftain and a laird. They all said with some variation, "None so bad!" and warmed their chilled frames. As for Trabue, he had been developing all day French gayety.

When they were warm and reasonably dry they set about supper; food and the fewest utensils for cooking and serving being brought from the wagon. They had venison, cut from the deer Trabue had shot yesterday, and Indian corn meal bought from the last mill. Tam brought a bucket of water from the stream. Trabue broiled the meat. Mrs. Selkirk made the mush. They heated water in a kettle and poured in a small measure of rum from a jug which they carried, but must make last for Providence knew how long! When all was done, and grace had been said, they ate and drank with some cheer, for all the rain and the howling wind.

"What if they could see us now!" said Mrs. Selkirk. "Mrs. Gillespie and Mrs. McTavish and Margaret Bell and the Jarvies —"

"If it blows and rains like this at Thistlebrae —"

"Oh, they'll say, 'They are warm and gay by tobacco and palm!'"

Supper over, it was to think of the night. Their custom was for the women to sleep in the wagon, upon what bedding they could place, but to-night the fire was better for all, the fire and this overhanging rock. They had blankets, cloaks and plaids. Robin and Tam and Elizabeth collected more wood. Trabue tethered the horses to a tree, then moving to the wagon took, with Andrew's help, from under the covering muskets and powder and stowed them in a niche of the rock. "This is a real camping place," he asserted. "If it had not been for those blessed mudholes we should have passed it by! It's been used before. A fire was built yonder, and one here."

"Indians?"

"Indians or settlers pushing west. Both, I reckon. The Indians the longest ago."

"This is not Indian country now."

"No. But they are main wanderers"

He looked around the circle and at the fire and then out into the tossing forest. There was light enough yet to see by, but the night was closing in. "You wouldn't think there could be a soul abroad — but here we are ourselves — and a wilderness never quite lacks for men; besides, there being beasts at all times. The fire neither — we don't want it to go out. So I think we'd better set a watch. I'll take the first three hours."

"Very good, Stephen! As you think we should."

After making things tidy, they put another pine branch upon the fire and all drew around it and fell silent. No evening, in Scotland or in a Virginian wilderness, without its evening prayer. Trabue sat with them, Anthony between his knees. He too remembered back to Huguenot prayer, in storm and loneliness and difficulty. John Selkirk sat for a moment with bowed head, then spoke. "Phemie, you say the Ninetieth Psalm."

Phemie began, the fire lighting her slender form, her lifted head. She had lovely eyes and a fawnlike grace.

"Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth —"

The serious young voice went on to the end:

"Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children.

"And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us: and establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it."

She ended. "Let us sing," said the minister, "the comforting One Hundredth."

They all could sing, every Selkirk that was. Sweet, under the rain and the wind rang the voices,

"All people that on earth do dwell
Sing to the Lord with cheerful voice,
Him serve with mirth, his praise forth tell.
Come ye before him and rejoice.

"Know that the Lord is God indeed;
Without our aid he did us make;
We are his flock; he doth us feed,
And for his sheep he doth us take."

They sang it through, in the stormy night. After a moment the minister began to pray. They kneeled or bowed their heads in their hands where they sat. The wind rushed and chanted, the rain fell in an elfin, streaming, beyond-counting army, the fire clucked. John Selkirk's strong voice, not loud but strong, rose and sank. "Thy hand over us this night. Amen!"

They slept, Trabue, Andrew, the minister, waking in turn, sitting their two or three hours by the fire, watching against harm. Before dawn the wind died, the skies cleared. When all waked a divine freshness hung upon the Maytime forest and a redbird whistled loud in the top of an oak.

This day was Saturday. They found no more mudholes, but a firmer road. In the forenoon they passed two pack horses, a woman with a babe in her arms seated on one, a man walking beside the other. Where were they going? To the Shenando with all their goods. In the afternoon a shouting and cracking of whips before them brought Trabue alert. "Wagons, with four horses — two of them. We'll turn out here."

The wagons came down a steep hill with an effect of peril to all concerned. Big wagons from Burke's Fort, laden with peltry, smelling to heaven, and each accompanied by a couple of men and a boy. At the foot, having reached

it without accident, occurred a halt and loud greetings between them and the westward-going wagon. They knew Trabue, he them. Greetings and confabulation eager and vociferous; in the wilderness, when it was safe to do so, men met, so to speak, with a shout. They laughed and exchanged, Trabue and the Burke Fort wagoners, questions, answers, compliments, criticism, warnings and news. The Selkirks felt pleurably the excitement. This was something like, all this life and business coming from the west, from that strange, heretofore so silent home! Tam grinned with an ineffable delight. He and Elizabeth stood with clasped hands, looking and listening and smelling. "That boy says they've buffalo skins and bear skins and panther skins and fox skins and deer skins —" Robin likewise stood with bright eyes and a color in his cheek, joying in the eight horses and two great wagons, the men with their guns, the rough heartiness and laughter and joking. The sunshine was brilliant, picking out all detail.

"Good-by!" "Good-by!" "Good luck!" "Good luck!"

Sound died away behind them toward the east, the populous country, the shores of Virginia, the Atlantic, Scotland. Their own wagon and Bob and Dick came back to the road. They faced again the silences of the west.

"Over this long hill, and then a mile or so," said Trabue, "and we come to the Quaker Meetinghouse. Half a dozen families who believe that way came into these parts three or four years ago. They've taken up land and built their church, though they don't call it church. The Scattergoods are the nearest. They'll make you comfortable to-night, giving you the taste of a house again. As good folk as ever there were!"

But on the top of the hill a pin came out of the wagon and caused a delay, and farther on Bob developed a lame-

ness. Trabue said, "To-morrow's Sunday. 'Twill put him all right!" But they went slowly. It was dusk when they came to a cleared place, and in the midst of it an empty and quiet log building that was the meetinghouse. "Another mile to the Scattergoods," said Trabue. "There's a stream to cross. And they go to bed mighty early! They don't drink nor fiddle."

"Better stay here to-night," said Andrew.

His father agreed. "Yes, by their kirk. It's a good resting place. And as we do not journey to-morrow we'll be here to worship with them."

"Will you do that?" asked the son.

"Aye and blithely, seeing that the kirk we like best is not here, but that here in the wilderness is a kirk and a true one, I'm thinking, with leave and license from the Lord! The king does not so much matter—not here, Andrew!"

Andrew gave a short laugh. "I'm thinking with you, Father. But I'd like to hear you say all that in Thistlebrae or Edinburgh—aye, or in Williamsburgh!"

"It's freer here."

"Aye, it's freer." Andrew, who often took the lead and gave the orders, turned to Trabue. "Let's pitch camp here."

Trabue nodded. "It's the best thing, I'm thinking! Sleep here to-night and go to meeting to-morrow with the silent Quakers, after which we'll be asked to dinner and supper and to spend first-day night."

They made camp and had their supper, wild turkey and corn-meal cakes. Overhead the May stars came out. It was warm, the smoke went up straight. Near by choired a multitude of frogs. Suddenly rose a quick, metallic cry, "Whip-poor-will! Whip-poor-will!"

"What is it?"

"What is it? A bird!"

"Yes. The whippoorwill. If this is the first time you've heard it, it won't be the last."

"I've heard it often," said Andrew; and, "I've heard it all my life," said Nancy Milliken Selkirk.

"It's frequent," remarked Trabue. "It and the dogwood and the laurel higher up and the fireflies and the 'possum always seem to me to spell 'Virginia.' If I died and waked up a thousand years from now and heard and saw them, I'd say, 'Why, here I am, right in Virginia!'"

He laughed, lifting with a green leaf a coal to his pipe. The minister also was smoking, having taken it up four nights since, Trabue making him a pipe from a bit of corn-cob and a hollowed reed. He liked it and sat placidly exhaling a thin, blue, pungent cloud. At first his wife, Kirstie and Phemie exclaimed, half shocked, half fascinated. But the minister had smiled. "The wilderness will never tell! I'll throw it away in the Valley before I say to any, 'I'm the auld minister of Thistlebrae—'"

Andrew grunted. "It's naught to the clergy in Virginia behind us! Smoking, drinking, hunting, card playing—"

"Oh, they!"

The Scotchwoman's tone dismissed the Established Church in Virginia. John Selkirk smiled and smoked on, the cloud he raised mingling with the cloud lifted by the son of the Huguenots. "It's the wilderness, isn't it, Stephen? It's the wilderness. But we'll try to give the helping voice and hand still. And as I'm saying, Jeannie, it's no for long! I'll stop when we come to the Valley."

Elizabeth cried out, "Oh, look at the glitter yon! Oh, isn't the fairies?"

"No, no! Fireflies," answered Nancy, out of superior knowledge.

All looked at the moving, scintillant frieze among the trees. "I've read of them, but never thought to see them!"

exclaimed Kirstie. But Elizabeth scrambled to her feet and went to the edge of the stream above and beyond which they glistered and flickered most intensely. Here too the voices of the frogs were louder. There were nations and peoples of them up and down; they talked all their affairs, their loves and sorrows. The fireflies were like a shaken veil, where all the dots flashed, were alive and moved with a profound restlessness. The sky in the west stretched dimly pink, the world smelled earth and evening. On went the frogs, on flickered the fireflies. The child stood spellbound. What of faëry, what of wildness, what of homeliness with the wildness came and abode with her she could not have told. From a little distance, from over the stream, sounded "Whip-poor-will! Whip-poor-will!"

Yet when Tam came to her with a pushing hand and a jumping foot she pushed and jumped against and with him, playing, the two of them in the twilight, like strong young colts till the call came from the hearth set in the wilderness:

"Tam! Elizabeth!"

The Sabbath morn dawned bright. A mist went up from the stream. The whip-poor-will was silent, but now began the thrush, the mocker, the redbird, the robin and the wren. Breakfast was so sweet, with the dogwood around and the log meetinghouse dreaming in the sun. Early enough — toward ten by the minister's big silver watch — appeared a woman, a slight, middle-aged person in a plain gray gown and gray close-fitting bonnet. She crossed the stream upon a log fixed well above the water and smoothed for walking, but without a handrail. When she saw the wagon she stopped for a moment, shading her eyes with her hand, then came on to the meetinghouse, the little green, and the Selkirks.

She was the first of the Scattergoods. Men, women and children, others presently appeared. Then came the Tavern-

ers, then the Carrys and the Waites. All were dressed without any pomp and in one color, but most neatly. All said "thee" and "friend" and "John" and "Jean" and "Christiana"; all had deliberation and gentleness; all were glad that the journeyers to the Shenando country should come to meeting.

They sat in the meetinghouse, the Selkirks and Stephen Trabue, the men with the men, the women with the women. Great quiet fell. The walls of the building were of round logs, the chinks between filled with mortar; above the beams rose a cavernous, shingled roof; the floor was wood, smoothed as it might be, the benches rude, without backs. The two heavy doors and the small windows stood open to the sunshine. It poured in, bestowing upon the interior gold bars and gold disks and gold dust. But the Quakers seemed to sit in silver — or maybe gold within and silver without. A plain silver and restful. The forest pressed around, the forest fragrance entered with the wandering airs, and also the song of birds and the ripple of the stream. But the Quakers sat without sound or movement, not preaching nor praying nor singing. The elder Selkirks and Trabue doubtless knew of that; they sat as quietly as their hosts. But Tam and Elizabeth had not understood. They waited for the minister, and when he did not appear and did not appear thought there must have been a terrible accident. Maybe he was dead! But no one came to tell about it; no elder rose and took the situation in hand. Time went on. Nothing but quiet. Tam, for all the Thistlebrae training, fidgeted, drawing at last his father's attention, who bent to him and whispered, "This is their way. Sit still, and pray and sing within."

Tam subsided. He was used to abstraction of attention in kirk, and knew the way — though sometimes what his father was saying caught him. Now he went with promptness to

that miraculous Valley before him, and then for alternation to the moor above Thistlebrae, to Rob and Wull and Jamie and Angus, the stone fort they had there, the curlews in the blue air above, and the two dogs, Dart and Rover. He sat quite contentedly, piling stones for the Wallace Tower.

Elizabeth drew the like information from her Aunt Kirstie. "No, nothing's happened. It's their way. They just sit still and try to hear God speaking. You do the same!" So Elizabeth sat still and tried for it. Like Tam she saw Thistlebrae, though she went elsewhere than to the moor and the building fortress. Then she thought of the Valley to which they were going, and she also made it a child's paradise — only she hoped that the wolves would not howl at night. Several nights ago, waking, she had heard them, away in the forest, and had seen Stephen get up and throw a great branch upon the fire. She hoped there wouldn't be wolves — or rattlesnakes — or Indians. A bird was singing in an ash tree that pressed close to the window. He was singing because the Quakers wouldn't. In Thistlebrae they were singing,

O Lord unto my prayer give ear,
My cry let come to thee —

A stream of light was flowing from the door through the meetinghouse. It struck on this side and on that where, like a doubled string of beads, sat without motion men and women. So intensely lighted, in the intense quiet, they seized the child's eyes and then her mind and feeling. She seemed never to have seen men and women before. They sat so still, held in that light. Something deep down and all around and perhaps high up, stilly, softly, released itself in her. She felt life, another kind of life, another kind of faëry life; not child life but girl life; felt it afar, with a

strange sweetness and salt and glamor and luster and melancholy and triumph. The premonitory perception ceased, leaving only the fact that it had quickened.

In the meetinghouse the quietness continued. The Spirit moved no one to speak. The place grew peace, not gray peace but crystal peace. John Selkirk sat with folded hands. "Lord, Lord, in a New Land give us peace with freedom!" The redbird sang, the crystal peace flowed on.

CHAPTER VII

FROM the hilltop they saw running across their road a river, a sizable affluent of the James. "How are we going to cross?"

"By the ferry. There's a ford higher up. But two men came a year ago and made a ferry. Morgan's Ferry."

The ferry boat was stout and long and wide and ran into the bank so that Bob and Dick and the wagon went upon it easily. A strong white man and two black men yet more powerfully built took long poles and the whole crossed. The younger Selkirks loved, loved, loved going to the Valley!

Days had passed. Before them now rose higher and higher hills, and in the distance mountains. Sometimes these appeared a pure, light blue, sometimes purple blue, sometimes indigo. "The Blue Ridge," said Trabue. Although the falls and Richmond were days behind them the burgeoning, the blossoming spring appeared to rest at the point of their outsetting. "It's because we are lifting," said Stephen. "The earth's climbing and the spring comes slower."

A tall man with a little horse beside which he walked came out of oak, maple, beech and birch toward them. Across the horse were thrown hempen bags that nearly touched the ground. The man had a musket and a huge powderhorn and a great knife. He and his horse drew aside to let the wagon and the walkers pass. They greeted him, he them. Nancy and Kirstie and Phemie, who were walking with Andrew and Robin, gasped a little and hurried by.

"Wolves' heads," spoke Trabue from the wagoner's seat.
"How many, hunter?"

"Twenty. Eight grown, the rest cubs."

"That's a tidy sum at Orange Courthouse! A hundred pounds of tobacco for an old one, and fifty for a cub."

"Aye, if it wasn't for wolf money—!" answered the man. "Here's a bitch wolf that nearly did for me. Well, so long!"

He disappeared into oak, maple and birch. The slow wagon went slowly on, the walkers tramped the most rough and narrow road.

"That's great money for wolves' heads."

"They're a tarnation pest! Stock has to be penned in winter from them. Backwoods men pay head tax and church tithe so, and make besides."

On turned the wheels, on went Bob and Dick and Anthony, Trabue and the Selkirks. These last were as brown as berries, and though at times they grew tired and footsore, yet were they in health and hardy and the women blooming. All freshness of attire was gone; rain and sun and wear and tear had seen to that. Jean Selkirk's bag, in which were thread and needles and bits of cloth came often, at their halts, into requisition. Their linen was washed in running brooks. At the best they looked like what they now were, country folk on some long progression; at the worst they might, in Great Britain, have been taken for gypsies. They were losing count of time. They made few miles a day. Here was the morning start—here was the noon halt—here was evening and the camp fire—here was the night, starry, moon-lighted, or cloudy. Here was rain, here were swollen fords and a terrible road, here was the sun that no wonder men worshiped. They saw and heard all manner of forest beasts; they hunted for food, Trabue, Andrew and Robin being the hunters. The musket cracked, the stag

or doe fell; they dragged it through the forest to the camp. Or there dropped the wild turkey, so bronze and stately. They still had meal, having replenished at every mill.

At times, from some height that the road went over, they saw the James shining near at hand or in the distance; then they left it or it left them, bending like a serpent of the other world. "The Powhatan," said Trabue. "That's what the Indians call it."

As though the word had conjured them they came upon Indians. The road bent around a jut of cliff all hung with fern and the white-sweet fringe tree. Before them appeared a little glade, a stream, and a party of seven or eight lying like red fruit about a fire. The sun was close to setting, and the white journeyers had immediately to make camp. But should they make it here, with these who rose up and invited them to do so?

They did so, nor repented it. The Indians were friendly Cherokees from over the river, wanderers back just to see an old country that once they had lived in. Two were elderly men, the others young hunters, and the red and the white amicably foregathered. The fire crackled and danced; to the venison the Indians provided, the newcomers added a brace of turkeys and meal and the pan to bake it in. The minister spoke aside to Trabue. "Suppose we share with them a pitcher of hot water and rum?" But the wagoner shook his head. "No, I'd just as soon not let these young bucks know we've any fire water. It's the one thing that makes them forget their own religion and honor and everything! It acts on them as though it came from hell. I'm going to keep my eye on the jug there to-night, just in case there may be a rogue among them."

But there was no rogue there. Night passed serenely, morning came, breakfast was eaten, the Cherokees were

parted with as one parts with friends. "If all Indians are like that —!" exclaimed Jean Selkirk.

"They aren't," answered Trabue. "Any more than all out of Europe are like you folks."

"But there is a signed peace with them all —"

"Yes, there is. But a lot of gunpowder is always lying around loose. And there never seem to lack fools the love of whose life it is to whirl firebrands! But maybe only they will be hurt. Get up, Bob!"

The Indian camp lay two days in the rear. Before them now rose definitely the Blue Ridge, high, and changing color with all the hours of the day. The great, the ever-spreading forest, took on a quality not of the lower lands. They had come now into a miracle of pink and white laurel, and a rosy loveliness that Trabue and Nancy called wild honeysuckle. The small rivers that they forded ran clear and tumbling, with miniature rapids and cascades. From height after height, they saw to every horizon forest and forest and forest. It was now May and many trees in the first luster of the unfolded leaf. "Oh, the endless, endless, endless forest!" cried Kirstie Mackay. "Was it so with Scotland and England and Ireland once upon a time?"

Robin, trudging beside her, swung a stick and caught it again. He had a rugged beauty, so light, sinewy and strong he was, with tawny hair and sea-blue eyes. His breeches, shirt and coat, hose and shoes had somehow taken on a more weather-beaten, close-fitting and integral a look than was the case with the others; he had begun to seem of a piece and a forester without reservation.

"Yes, it was so!" he said. "It suits me. I like it!"

Trabue had halted the wagon to get a stone out of Dick's shoe. Tam and Elizabeth had made on ahead. Suddenly there rose a cry. "Oh, the biggest snake! Oh, come!"

Trabue jerked up his head and cocked his ear. "That's

a rattler!" He snatched his gun and ran up the road, Robin following. But before they reached the place the children had killed the snake. They were growing — all were growing — to the woods.

One night in camp two great bears came to the wagon. Another time Phemie, sitting suddenly up, where, the night being warm and the wagon close, the women as well as the men were sleeping about the embers of their fire, saw two glassy, fiery eyes, too large and wide apart for those of a man, glaring from a bush before her. Her exclamation roused the others, for they were all grown light sleepers, light and sound at one and the same time. Trabue flung a firebrand into the bush; the creature went away. "A painter — a big one! But it isn't his fierce season, unless you fool with his woman!"

They went to sleep again, all but Elizabeth who found that, she knew not why, she could not get back to that land. She lay awake and saw a great star mount above a pine and stand overhead. It was blue; it was moving slowly, slowly, slowly across the opening. That should have put her to sleep, but it didn't. The forest was full of noises; she could tell them over now without creeping close to her mother or Aunt Kirstie's side. The noise of trees, the noise of birds, the noise of small animals and of great ones, the noise of moving air, the noise of water. Overhead, where the stars were walking, was no noise, or she could not hear it, it would be so far away! However a meteor shot across, and that made her heart thump a moment as at an unknown sound. What was it — whence did it come — and where was it going? It was gone; there was only the big, blue star. She could not get to sleep.

Homesickness befell her. She had hardly felt it before, for her family were with her — all except Jean in Edinburgh — and abundantly there had been the novelty, the

forever changing that a child finds dearest. But now quite suddenly she wanted Thistlebrae, the manse, the lilac in the garden, the finch in the cage, Rover the dog on the door stone, Jessie Ross next door, Scotland — wanted them so badly that the tears came streaming. Her mother moved. “Elizabeth, what’s the matter?”

Elizabeth came into her arms. “I want my home! Scotland’s gone away forever. I’ll forget it — I was forgetting it. I don’t want to forget!”

They were all astir again. “What!” said Trabue good-naturedly. “It’s not a painter this time! It’s a little girl crying for her doll.”

Tam talked indignantly to the darkness. “What’s she greeting for? I wouldn’t be a girl for anything!”

“There, there, Bess!” said Nancy. “I know what ’tis. I’ve let a few tears fall!”

John Selkirk moved toward his daughter. “Do not cry, do not cry, bairnie! The whole dear earth is our home. Scotland and Thistlebrae and all will rest with you still!”

But, “No, it won’t!” sobbed Elizabeth. “It will bide with the rest of you, except Tam, and he disna care! But I’ll forget the herb bed and the lilac and Rover!”

Her mother comforted her, and at last she went to sleep in her arms, and when she waked it was sunrise and she only remembered that she had cried in the night. And that morning they came to meadows of wild strawberries. She and Tam were down on their knees. “Oh, look, look! Mother, I will get you a great leaf full!” Delight sat in her face — gone were the manse, the lilac, Jessie Ross, Scotland.

Mountains rose around them, though not so high as the crest wave that neared and neared. Mountains big, middle-sized and little, and rich bottom lands where flowed the James or Powhatan, and over all ran forest and forest and

forest. Only now and then there spread about them an Indian meadow or savannah, green with rank grass and pea vine, set like a vegetable lake with borders of trees. "Aye," said Trabue, "Indians cleared them, long ago. Indian meadows, Indian old fields. They had their maize, and maybe their village there by that stream. But the big clearing yonder is buffalo ground."

"Buffalo ground?"

"An old one. There aren't any buffalo around here now. No one knows why. They say the Indians fired year after year until they got grazing places that would draw the creatures through the Alleghany passes from the far west. They say the country you're going to—wherever it's level or just rolls—is more grass and pea vine than woods. The Indian's gone from it and the buffalo's gone, and nobody seems to know just why. There are very few buffalo grounds this side of Blue Ridge. That we're looking on is one. But they move in herds, and no one sees any now. There's nothing that interests me more than change, unless it is lastingness."

"There is one change that we shall not like," said the minister, "and that is leaving you, Stephen Trabue!"

The others had the same thing to say. "We'll miss you, Stephen! You don't know how much we'll miss you."

Trabue laughed with a moved sound in his laughter. "You mayn't believe it, but I'm going to miss you too! Bob and Dick and Anthony and I are going to miss you. But there! I'll be coming some day into New Virginia and find you. You'll be there on a fine plantation, with a neighbor to the right and a neighbor to the left, and a church bell ringing Sunday mornings. Tam will be a fine young man and Elizabeth a beauty."

"No, I won't!" said Elizabeth. "I'm going to be a useful woman."

That night they slept within sight and sound of the river. "It's the rapids above. There's almost as great a fall here as at Richmond, though there's less water to tumble and roar. We're under the Blue Ridge now for sure! That river comes right through it."

The next day they came on the mountain side to Burke's Fort, an outpost named for Colonel Matthew Burke, but maintained out of public monies by His Majesty's Government in Virginia. In this long time of peace a dozen rangers under their own captain made the only garrison. A stockade, a blockhouse and cabins within, and all rather decayed and negligent, with the stockade gate swinging open from sunrise to sunset; such was Burke's Fort, and some of the rangers were in and some were out, hunting or at other diversions.

Trabue's wagon and the trudging Selkirks toiled up the steep and rocky way that was now nothing but a rather wide trail, passed through the gateway into stockade and found in charge a saturnine young man. "How d'ye? Stephen Trabue, isn't it? Thought I knew your horses and your dog. Folk for the Shenando?"

"Aye. Burke's Tract. The Reverend Mr. Selkirk and his family."

The young man greeted them with a kind of rustic and surly grace. "Mr. Campbell has been on the lookout for you." He raised his voice, "Hi! Robert! Tell Mr. Campbell Colonel Burke's folk are here!"

A spare, middle-aged man, in an old blue coat, black waistcoat and brown stockings, stepped from one of the cabins and crossed the grass-grown space.

"Good day, Mr. Trabue! The Reverend Mr. Selkirk, I'm thinking? I am James Campbell, at your service; Colonel Burke's agent."

"I am pleased to meet you, Mr. Campbell! This is my

wife, and these —" He presented them. "Colonel Burke told us we should find you."

"Aye. Hugh Dunlap, coming in a fortnight since, brought a letter about you. I've your pack horses, and Henry Salling for your guide. Mrs. Selkirk, that biggest cabin there is ready for you. The horn blows for dinner at noon. We're very glad to see you all at Burke's Fort."

The readiness of the cabin consisted in being empty and clean. A stream ran by just out of the gate, and so sylvan were the Thistlebrae folk by now that all sufficed. The men unloaded the wagon, heaping the Selkirks' worldly gear under the cabin eaves, after which Bob, Dick, Anthony and Stephen Trabue went off to the shed that answered Burke's Fort for stable.

In at the gate came the hunter rangers, bearing a doe and a brace of turkeys. Other three or four appeared from nowhere. An ox horn was winded. Dinner — dinner — dinner! In the lower room of the "fort", with an earthen floor, and boards on trestles, and all matters cooked at the fireplace by a black man named Mingo.

The Selkirks, crossing the space between their appointed cabin and the main structure, met in transit at least six rangers. All were young men, the most were tall, and they wore — first seen here by the party for the west — hunting shirts of linsey. These were like smocks, reaching almost to the knee but belted closely, with sleeves of capacity and a fringed cape. Some were dyed brown, some blue, and with breeches of linen or of leather, leggings and moccasins, made, in the May weather, a fair Robin Hood dress. When a man had a free and manly air it became him, and so thought the Selkirks of some of these rangers. There were greetings, Burke's Fort being always glad to see easterners and westerners of its own hue. It stood there to be hospitable and helpful, and it was profoundly so to the right

kind of folk, news bearers and company. Evidently Stephen Trabue's convoy was of the right kind, and as for the women with it they were angels out of the blue. All the rangers had "cleaned up", and they were gallant in their way, and the women thought they were fine young men — as they were.

CHAPTER VIII

TRABUE rested a day and a night at Burke's Fort. Then Bob and Dick were put to the wagon, laden now with pelts for the eastern market. Anthony circled the whole, his eye cocked to his master. John and Andrew Selkirk and Trabue had their settlement aside. So much money, the agreed-upon sum, changed from the wallets of father and son to that of the wagoner. "Is that right and satisfactory, Mr. Trabue?"

"All right and satisfactory, Mr. Selkirk."

"Aweel, Stephen, that's done! But we can never pay you in money for your good company and guidance. That is to be done in respect and affection, and there, too, I hope we're honest!"

"Mr. Selkirk, I've wagoned a power of folk in ten years — but none that all together mean as much to me as you and your family. As for you, sir, in my mind you're not far from a saint."

"Oh, no! No more a saint than you are, Stephen Trabue! Though at times I've thought you saintly. I'm full glad the Huguenots came to Virginia."

Each Selkirk and Kirstie Mackay pressed hard his hand. "Come to see us, Stephen! Come to see us in the Valley!" Tam hugged Anthony. Elizabeth came breathless up at the last with a tiny box painted over with a Scotch mountain and loch. "Mr. Stephen, I want to give it to you! It's mine. You can put your tobacco or your flints in it."

"It's so pretty I don't like to take it from you, Bess!"

But the minister said, "Yes, if her heart says to give."

"Then I'll always keep it, and I'll remember every one of you, and see you often in New Virginia!"

So at last he was gone, rumbling down the stony, crazy road. The white wagon top vanished in the white dogwood. The Selkirks felt lonely, as though suddenly old Virginia, and with it every bridge to the Old World, had dropped away. So close above them now reared and hung the main mass of the Blue Ridge! What lay behind it, what? Long life, or short life, and what kind of life? Question and coldness began to creep about them. Jean Selkirk sighed, and Kirstie stood fingering a bit of wild plum and looking eastward afar. But here came a couple of rangers, going hunting, and inviting Andrew and Robin with them; and then another two or three, among them their captain by election, a very well-looking youth, and these would take the women and Tam, and the minister too if he would, to a great, rocky point of view not far from the fort, whence could be seen to advantage the mountains, the river and the broken green world out of which they had come. The minister and his wife declined the jaunt, but the others departed with their hosts, and presently from the laughter floating down the trail it would seem that faint sadness had been given her congée. John Selkirk and his wife took their seat upon a bench built beneath a pine that murmured like the sea and sent down in the strong spring sunshine a fragrance wholesome and delightful.

She said, "What will Jean be doing the day in Edinburgh? Thinking of us, I make no doubt!"

"Aye, as we think of her. Not only think of her, but feel her, Jean. We are none so far apart! It is still home and one another — so close the One holds us!"

"Aye, it maun be, though I do not feel it so strong as you do, John. But it maun be."

A brilliant butterfly sailed past, and a gray bird that they

called a catbird perched upon a thorn and burst into a shower of song. Two bear cubs, most delightful small things, kept by Mingo, emerged from the log structure that represented the keep of this fortress, and gamboled. John and Jean Selkirk laughed, watching them. "They and we! It's a bonny, strange world, Jean!"

"Here is Mr. Campbell."

James Campbell sat down beside them. "Well, Mr. Selkirk, this time to-morrow we shall be well on our way! The horses will be in this evening from where we pasture them."

"I am glad that you go with us."

"Such are Colonel Burke's instructions. He has got, Mr. Selkirk, a poetic feeling about Burke's Tract. He wants all who go there to go in the best way, and to find it Arcadia!"

"I have drawn from your turns of speech, sir, that you are a scholar."

"Nothing to speak of, Mr. Selkirk; nothing to speak of! But I went to St. Andrew's in my youth. Then much happened. I found myself in Belfast, in poor circumstances. No! I had not thereafter time for the muses!"

"Then you left Ireland—"

"On the *Margaret and Anne* ten years ago, for Philadelphia. I spent several years in that town, clerking it for an old acquaintance and going about in Pennsylvania on his errands. Then, meeting a man named Joist Hite, of German descent, who was full of New Virginia and opportunity and elbow room, I agreed at last—having for reasons given up my clerkship—to go with him and his party across Potomac into the promised land. He was removing like a patriarch of old with his household and his sons-in-law and their families, Bowman, Froman and Chrisman. In the end others gathered to him, Duffy, McKay, Green, Stephens

and others, until we went in a horde, sixteen families. If you are a reader, or a kind of inner rememberer, sir, as of course you are, you would have been minded of early migrations of our own stock. This was in 1732. Except for a handful of Germans at Massanutten we were the first truly to settle in the Sherando or Shenando country. We came down by the old Indian warpath that's worn deep and is wide enough for a wagon, and now that so many have followed us is called the Pennsylvania Road. It's still the only one — it and the old, narrower, crisscrossing trails the only roads. The sixteen families settled on or near Opequon that flows into Potomac. Hite took what land he wanted, not bothering about proprietors, but afterwards he had to arrange with John and Isaac Vanmeter who had a land warrant for just that region. Land titles and land troubles began, I'm thinking, the morning after the fall!"

"Even in the wilderness?"

"Anywhere where there's material for them — and that's land, sir! In a little while came after us Moore and Allen and White from Maryland, Stover and Shepherd and Harper and the Swaengens and a lot beside. Some settled on the river Shenando, and some stayed just south of Potomac. Rutledge, Howard and Coburn turned to the west of the Indian Road, to the Wappatomaka, that's the south branch of Potomac. Ross the Quaker and others of his belief bided on the Cacapon. I stayed in the lower Valley — 'lower' is north, 'upper' is south — only until John Lewis appeared, bound for the country south of Hite. He was Ulster. I joined him."

"Where is he now?"

"Something like midway between Hite's region and Burke's Tract to which you are going. With his wife and his two daughters and his sons, Thomas, Andrew, William and Charles, he's built his cabin near two little mountains

that he's named Bessy Bell and Mary Gray after the two in Tyrone. Following him, there's come Ulster and Ulster and Ulster! Robertsons, and Patrick Campbell my kinsman, and Matthews and McClanahans and McClungs and so on. John Lewis and all are now in contention with Colonel Beverley as to lands. There's already beginning law enough to keep lawyers going for a hundred years!"

"It has a home sound!"

"James McDowell and others have settled in Borden's Grant, south of Lewis. And there's James Patton and his son-in-law John Buchanan, and a mort besides. Then comes in Burke's Tract, south of all that, by the James. For myself, I fell in with Colonel Matthew Burke, and now I am working for him."

He sat with his gaze upon the bear cubs, a rather bleary-eyed, untidy man. "The Great Valley! They ought to call it New Ulster! Folk whose fathers fought for Londonderry and King William, and then the Kings of Britain forgot it, folk who've known persecution and oppression, starving folk and folk who saw starvation just up the lane, and folk above that but who chafed in their proud spirits — all the restless with a good reason for restlessness — they've come, they're coming! What's an ocean when men glint freedom and maybe wealth? In some cases they all lift together like a flock of birds, and settle down here, the same flock."

"It's not so unlike Scotland and Ireland — barring the infinite forest, and that we're far away now from the sea."

"No, it's not. There are mountains and streams enough. The climate's softer, but not so soft as to melt one's bones as it does in the tobacco lands. No, it's a goodly country! It has poetic beauty."

"Aye, and the Scots were never a soft race."

"No, never a soft race."

They sat still a little, while the cubs played and the great butterfly flitted about and the gray bird sang as though enchanted.

Then said Jean Selkirk, "And how is it that we shall get our house? Shall John here and Andrew and Robin, just themselves, fell the trees and build it?"

"No, no!" answered Campbell. "We're neighborly when it comes to the wilderness. There are four or five families already in Burke's Tract. We're getting used to house-raising. As soon as you are surveyed, and have looked about a bit and chosen your spot we shall name a day and send around. Every able-bodied man will come, though he live twelve miles away. You'll have choppers and planers and carpenters and masons enough! In the wilderness men become general again, and do what their forefathers did in whatever kind. In three or four days you'll have a house. After a while, of course, you can build a larger one."

"Will we all camp while it is being done?"

"In part. But whoever's your nearest neighbor, and I'm thinking 'twill be Sandy Murchieson, will be crying for the honor of the minister and you, ma'am, and your sister and daughters in his house. I expect to find there young Neill the surveyor."

He rose. "I've got accounts to cast up, so I'll be going now."

He departed. John and Jean Selkirk sat hand in hand under the fragrant, whispering pine, in company with the bear cubs and the gorgeous butterfly and the singing bird until human voices floated down from the path without the stockade. Tam and Elizabeth first appeared.

"Oh, Father — Mother — we have seen through the pass into the Valley!"

CHAPTER IX

THE wild grape had flowered six times since the crossing of the Blue Ridge by the Selkirks. In May it would bring for the seventh time its inexpressible sweetness. But now it was November and the first snow of the winter was falling. It fell thickly, in large, white flakes, a veil at once restless and constant, hung between gazing eyes and the features of the earth.

Within the minister's house, beneath a flank of First Man Mountain, upon the wide stone hearth, oak and chestnut and pine flamed and purred and sang and threw out the cheer-fullest light and warmth. The light struck the crane, the swinging pot, the kettle on the hob, then leaving the cave of fire gushed forth upon the room, upon walls of logs, mortar-chinked, beam and rafter, puncheon floor, heavy, rude doors, small windows with heavy shutters, and the corner stair that went up to the loft. There were three doors—one giving upon the falling snow before the house, and one upon the falling snow at the back, and one into a second and smaller room, which in its turn opened into a yet smaller third. The minister's house thus possessed three rooms and a loft, and save for Alexander Murchieson's was the most spacious residence at this end of Burke's Tract if not throughout it. It was not his earliest residence. That had been the one room and loft structure of all first comers. But after two years, when there were twenty families settled between First Man Mountain and the river, when Mt. Olivet Church was built, and the churchyard enclosed, and a cabin set for a school beside the Big Spring, then they set to and

her. "May you be very happy, Bess, and never forget that I am by you!" Colonel Matthew Burke embraced his daughter. "Elizabeth, I've worshiped him, and now I've you also to worship!" Conan kissed Kirstie, "Aunt Kirstie!" He and Andrew shook hands. "Brothers, Conan!" "Brothers, Andrew!" He embraced his father. "Father, if I can be to my son what you've been to me —"

Mr. Warham kissed the bride, the Warham family added their felicitations, the indentured youth grinned from beyond the circle of the oak. Colonel Burke and the parson spoke apart, with a glint of gold from hand to hand. This was no unimportant linking to be solemnized for a beggarly six-shilling fee!

The parsonage of a sudden looked sunnier, wealthier. There were only a parish, a glebe and a parsonage, not yet a church. For what could you do when nine tenths of your parishioners were Dissenters and had their own stout, good church at Tinkling Spring, nay, were about to build a Stone Church? There was also a vestry with considerable duties, but more than half of the vestrymen worshiped at Tinkling Spring, conforming just enough to be vestrymen and that was all. Once overtop the Blue Ridge and descend into the west, and the very air became Presbyterian. Not that Episcopal zephyrs did not breathe, nor that there lacked a few other currents, but the stiff breeze roared Calvin and Knox! Calvin and Knox! Mr. Warham did as he could, with the Church of England and of Virginia for prop, with prerogatives such as this of marriage, with his support, his glebe, parsonage and salary tithed from those who themselves went to the Tinkling Spring church. But he felt always the air as of a chilly day, as if he needed a great-coat against it.

To-day struck sunnier, with two golden guineas in hand, and this a genial party — genial for all that the bride and

"I did not know that you remembered that!" said Kirstie at the table.

"I remember all the verses you've ever told me.

"... He was a braw gallant,
And he played at the glove,
And the bonny Earl of Murray
Oh, he was the Queen's love."

Her mother spoke from the spinning wheel. "It's well you've got the father you have, my bairn, with the songs Kirstie has taught you and you've learned! You could not have sung that in Thistlebrae, with the kirk's hand at its lug! I don't know where Kirstie has kept them. She couldn't sing them there, either!"

"This country's freer," said Kirstie. "First Man Mountain won't be telling, nor Eagle Ridge; no, nor Mt. Olivet."

"Oh, lang will his lady
Look o'er the castle down,
E'er she see the Earl of Murray
Come sounding through the town."

Kirstie poured the batter in a pan, set this upon a trivet and the latter over glowing coals. "I wish," said Jean, "that old Mrs. Ellis would jump the winter with her dying spells! John could go see her twice before the leaves fall and twice when they're budding again and so make it up. She'll die one day when she's not looking for it, and without the minister!"

"He'd go," said Elizabeth, "if 'twas midnight of the last night of the year and the snow was choking the wind and the wind driving the snow."

"The lady came down the stair
Wringing her hand;
'He has slain the Earl of Murray,
The flower of Scotland.'"

Dinner was set upon the table. The three women sat themselves down to the frugal meal. "For what we are about to receive, Lord, make us thankful! Save us from ill and protect the absent, for thy Name's sake. Amen!"

They were not a garrulous three. Each sat in her own silence, breaking it only occasionally. Elizabeth was still moving through the snowy day with her father.

"Mrs. Ellis means well, though she wishes a ferryman at every burnie! But John and Esther Gellatly do not mean well." Her voice vibrated. "With their crying that he's unorthodox, and is leading Burke's Tract along the broad and easy road that leads the world knows where! My certie! Strait and steep and hard would their poor weak knees and puffing breath find his road! The reason is just that he brought them before the kirk for the way they treated young Alan!"

"You've stumbled on the right of it," said her mother with quietness. "It were hard to miss, seeing it's as plain as First Man Mountain!"

Kirstie spoke. "Duncan Gow stopped me three days syne, 'An', says he, 'is it true, Mrs. Kirstie, that the minister holds that babes are not damned if they die unbaptized? For that's a fearful doctrine, ma'am, to be preaching here!' With which he wambled away."

"He's always in a state of terror for his poor, thin soul!" said Elizabeth. "If I couldn't nourish mine better I'd give it up and go hence!"

Jean Selkirk sighed. "The moral of it is that your father may have trouble again, and I nursed my hopes that he

never would — never would have that kind of trouble any more!"

"There's plenty to stand by him," said Kirstie. "Alexander Murchieson and the Jarvies and the Ochiltrees and more. And Andrew and Rob are none so weak, either. And, moreover, there's Colonel Matthew Burke."

"Aye, maybe 'twill come to naught. But the better a man is, the more he's in danger."

"Ah," said Kirstie. "But the world does not see the clear spaces where he's not in danger!"

They sat in silence for a space, then began upon others absent and those were Robin and Tam who were gone trading to Burke's Fort. They might be looked for home in two or three days. They might be at Indian Head by now.

"I long to hear their news!" That was Elizabeth. "How they sold the skins and what they've bought, and whom they've seen, and what they said!"

"You are always on the watch to know the tidings of the universe! But my desire is just to have Robin and Tam back safe."

"You're like old Topknot in the spring time, Jean," said her sister. "You want your brood where you can lay hand on them."

"Aye, I do. Thoughts and feelings are good, aye, but one wants body too! I dreamed last night of Jean, and she was down by the wave in Leith, looking under her hand to us."

Said Elizabeth, "I can't remember Jean clearly any longer, and Edinburgh's like a strange dream."

"Do you remember," asked Kirstie, "the night coming here, when you waked us all with your greeting for home, and because you said you would forget?"

"I remember. But now here is home. . . . I remember

some things and forget others. . . . Crying's good too, sometimes. But I don't cry much."

The meal was eaten. Jean Selkirk returned to her wheel, Kirstie washed and put by the dishes, Elizabeth fed the hound, Watch, and when that was done looked out of window. "The snow falls thinly now." She went back to the loom where she was weaving linsey-woolsey, flax and wool intertwined. Kirstie, the table cleared, began to cut out a gown from stuff woven in the summer. They had their flax patch and their sheep. Whir of wheel, sound of scissors upon cloth, clack of loom, November daylight, red firelight — Elizabeth left her work. "The snow is stopping and there is not an inch upon the ground. Mother, I'm going to see how are Phemie and Nancy and the children. I'll be back in time to tend the creatures."

"If there weren't Andrew's and Phemie's to go to," said Kirstie, "or any neighbor at all to give you a reason, you'd be stepping it still, just to speak with land and river and tree and weather!"

"Tell Phemie," said her mother, "to bring little Jean the morrow. And take Watch with you."

Out of doors the snow, still falling, fell lightly and sparsely. The wind did not blow and it was not cold. The girl had a warm cloak and hood, and stout shoes made by John Walsh who had been souter in Glasgow. In summer she would wear moccasins, homemade on winter eves. Before her, between spectral sycamores, gleamed the river. On the other side stretched Eagle Ridge, and that was a mighty mountain wall propping the east and the west. But this side had First Man Mountain and needed no mightier. All the rest of the brood, Pine and Hawk, Nevis and Old Indian, seemed small beside it. Snow had powdered their trees. Over the vast slopes and the long, straight or wavy or peaked tops went the trees in their myriads. The bottom

land had trees in part, and grass — Indian meadows — in part, and in vague and slight part white men's clearings. The minister's clearing, Andrew Selkirk's clearing, the clearing of Rob Neill the surveyor, who had married Euphemia Selkirk, and others afar. Even on the lower slopes of Nevis and Old Indian one might make out with keen eyes tiny clearings. But Indian old fields and Caucasian new ones to the contrary, the trees appeared yet to own the world. They were so many, stopping never till the salt ocean stopped them! It would take Xerxes' army a thousand years to count them.

It was so still! One hardly heard the river. The hound followed the girl with a padding, soundless tread, and she herself was in one of her dreams. Nature had given her that realm, though likewise the gift of being able to come out of it at even a light call. She could not have told a questioner of what she was dreaming — misty forms and features of this life or another life, familiar landscapes at a remove, or unfamiliar ones at an advance, all nebulous and shifting, blown as it were by the wind of the spirit. At times, accompanying what mental perception there might be, she felt sweetness, then melancholy, then perhaps a wild, fresh energy, like the wild grape fragrance, or wind after rain.

In body she moved upon the river path, but her spirit went here and there. Her body was tall and strong, and had its own grace as of a young and promising tree. She had hair the color of dark honey, thick, long, and full of wave and tendril, hanging in a braid down her straight back, under her hood and cloak. Her head, throat and shoulders had beauty of shaping, her step was light and firm, her forehead said, "There are wits behind me." Her eyes were deep and gray, her mouth had strength and generosity.

Such as she was at eighteen, she pursued the river path

until she came to a gigantic sycamore that stretched a white and bronze arm far out over the cold, green, deeply running water. Here she left the water and took a thread of a path that led her over an expanse of snow-whitened meadow in which were wandering half a dozen horses and as many cows. She looked at them appraisingly. "They thrive. If Andrew says he will have herds he will have them!" All the Selkirks believed in Andrew—with reason. The meadow left behind, she came to a rude fence, rail and brush, and when she was over this into a field of maize, the stalks yet standing, brown and ragged, or cut and brought together into shocks. Out of that she came under the six great oaks and before the log house of Andrew and Nancy and their three children. A little behind it stood the one-room cabin that sheltered Tobias and Bartholomew and David Shinn, the three indentured youths who called Andrew master and worked his fields and looked to the stock. Andrew had a barn and a fold, and more than that, a quarter-mile away, on First Man Creek, a grist mill. Here, in the mill, lived Peter Peters, his miller, to whom he paid so much out of every grinding. Andrew had now three hundred acres of his very own,—good, Indian-cleared, grassy land. Herds of horses, droves of kine, were in Andrew's keen, cautious, and yet spreading mind. In the east it was tobacco that equaled gold and silver; in the high, the rolling, the grass-growing west, it would be stock. Corn and wheat also. But horses, cattle, sheep paraded his dreams with almost the jingle of guineas. In his mind he spread a strong hand over the future.

He was not at home to-day either—not gone to visit the sick with his father, or to trade peltry for salt and other matters with Robin and Tam, but riding on his horse Rory to see Murchieson and other neighbors about a petition to the court of Augusta County for a road to be cleared from

Mt. Olivet Church to Pine Mountain. It was Augusta County now, not Orange County—Augusta taken from Orange.

He rode by an old Indian trail, for they crossed and re-crossed the country in every direction, and were as yet almost wholly the only roads, and as he went he pondered the acquisition, through his father-in-law in Williamsburg, of another seven-years' man beside the three Shinns. Or would it not be better to buy a Negro? Such an one would be the first in these parts. But if he got a strong, docile one he would work well, and there would be no seven years about it. His father had a prejudice against buying black men, but Andrew did not share it, and acted for himself. He rode and thought of this, and of the mill and of prices, and Nancy and the children.

In the meantime, at his house on First Man Creek, Elizabeth played with Gregory, John and Deborah and exchanged with their mother gossip of minute domestic or neighborhood happenings. Nancy, grown a comely, humorous, decisive woman, working as she talked, spoke her mind upon Mrs. Ellis' spells, upon the Gellatlys and Duncan Gow, the best native dyes, the last house-raising, the laziness of mankind when it came to wolf hunting, even with such a price on the heads, the absurdity of giving every wandering party of Indians everything to eat in the house, and the iniquity of Will Ferguson and Martha Ramsay being forced to ride twenty winter leagues to the parson of the Established Church when every human being knew that it would be true marriage if Father Selkirk married them!

"Phemie wept, but she and Rob had to go—"

"It's cruel, absurd!" quoth Nancy and measured Jock's waist for his new coat. She looked up with slyly bright eyes. "When are you and James Ramsay going to take that ride?"

"Not ever."

"No?"

"No."

"Well, I just thought," said Nancy, "he'd like to take it."

"Then I hope he may, but with another than me."

Said Nancy, still on her knees measuring Jock, "Is it Gilbert Drew then?"

"No."

"You're choosy!"

"I don't know why I shouldn't be. Maybe I'll never wed, like Aunt Kirstie."

Nancy sat back upon her heels and regarded her young sister-in-law. In the children's play the latter's hair had become loosened, and a brightness and color and lovingness drawn into her face. She looked warmed from within; her shoulders, throat and head rose superbly above the little Deborah held to her. "No, oh, no!" said Nancy. "You'll marry, for all that there's a dash of Aunt Kirstie in you. We're most of us mixed, aren't we?"

"Ah, yes!" answered Elizabeth. "I want this and I want that. I wish there were faëry land—or heaven!"

After an hour with Nancy she went on to Phemie's house that was built on quite a high hill, under First Man Mountain. Rob Neill the surveyor liked it here where he could overlook the land, this man's parcel and that, and the stretches that yet belonged to Colonel Matthew Burke.

Nor was Rob either at home, for he also had gone to Murchieson's about the road petition. Phemie had news. "Who do you suppose is to be at the Murchiesons'? That Conan Burke of whom we've heard so long."

"No!"

"Yes, he is! His father is sending him down from Augusta Courthouse where he's been staying with the

Lewises. The Colonel would have come too, but he has the gout. There's some law quarrel or other — Rob knows about it. Well! It's like the laird's son at Thistlebrae."

"I don't remember —"

"No, you wouldn't. I mean he's important. His father has given him, no doubt, a hantle of land, and he'll have gold in his pocket."

"Does that make him important?"

"Oh, yes!" said Phemie with innocence; then, "Andrew will be asking him to Wide Fields."

"There isn't anybody but Andrew in all these parts who's clapped a name to his house."

"Oh, we'll follow!" said Phemie, still with her accustomed air of innocent pride. "I've been thinking of names."

"Well, we'll bide 'the minister's' for a while. No, they don't call it the Manse. Mother's wearying for little Jean. How she grows!"

The two concerned themselves with the two-year-old babbling upon a sheepskin by the fire, until Phemie, glancing at the window, exclaimed, "It's snowing again!"

Elizabeth looked, then rose from her play. "Yes, 'tis. I had better be going."

"I wish it wasn't so far."

"I don't call it far."

Phemie's liquid and contemplative eyes rested upon her sister. "I don't know whether it's a pity or a boon that you and Tam see everything a little differently from us who were grown when we came here."

"Do we?" asked Elizabeth somewhat wistfully. "Are we different, Phemie?"

"Aye," answered Phemie, considering. "You and Tam are different, though you aren't different alike. He seems to be on one path and you on another, but you've both the mark of the wilderness and America. Now Robin is a

kind of wilderness man too. He's the happiest in some ways of any of us here. But that's because he's just a born hunter and man of the woods. But you and Tam haven't got Scotland written on you—you've got Virginia. That's all! My Jean here, and Andrew's Gregory and Jock and Deborah will have it still more. They won't remember at all—they'll never have seen nor heard the sea."

"It's true," said Elizabeth thoughtfully. "We may be Indians after a while—though some of them have seen and heard the sea. But that won't happen either! Tam and I and Gregory and Jock and Deborah and Jean can't be so different as that!" She raised her young arms above her head. She regarded the fire and regarded the snow, and the great lines of First Man Mountain seen through that veil. "No, no! But we're going to be a great country, like and unlike!" She took her cloak and hood. "I'll be going before the snow falls too fast," and kissed the babe and Phemie.

CHAPTER X

OUTSIDE, before she was at the foot of the hill, the snow was falling thickly, in enormous white flakes. It fell straight, unblown by the wind, and by its magic the vast shape of First Man Mountain became invisible. The ground was growing more and more white. Elizabeth did not care; there was yet an hour of daylight, and even in the night her feet would have found the oft-trodden way. Passing Andrew's house, she crossed the field to the river. It was snowing beautifully, wonderfully, so quietly, so effectively, wiping out all the world save the very near. She began to feel with it, so far and wide, so many and yet so one, working without effort, without haste, without cessation, to leave the clouds and come into the earth, the streams, the river and the ocean. Falling, falling, falling, with purpose, without sound, dark in the air, white on the earth. . . .

At the gigantic sycamore she made pause, standing lost in her own sense of snow-leisure with determination. There was no hurry. The earth would be covered, the sun in good time would appear to help, the ocean would be reached. And then, all over again — save that more would be remembered, and better ways, maybe, thought she. . . . November and no wind, and the myriad, myriad, myriad falling flakes! A sycamore was a strange tree, so great of trunk, so long of arm, so pale of hue! Suddenly she saw white birches in Scotland. She had forgotten them — and then out they sprang! But they were small and distant, and this tree gigantic and close. Under the outstretched great bough glided the river, and the snowflakes melted into it. She

watched them. It was all faëry. The tree lived, the river and the snow.

A horse's hoof struck against a stone. Instantly she turned her head, looking to see Andrew or Rory coming back from Alexander Murchieson's. But it was not Rory and not Andrew, still in the distance, veiled by the snow, but another man. She watched him drawing nearer and nearer. He rode easily a big chestnut, larger than the breed of horses now in the Valley. He seemed himself a tall, strong man and young. She knew that by his whistle, for now he was whistling and that quite gayly. He had not seen her, in her gray cloak and hood, by the sycamore. When he did he started, and his whistling ceased. The path widened here into a circle and she waited for him to pass. But he drew rein and lifted his hat. "Good day, madam! Is the sycamore your home?"

"Good day, sir. No, I live at the minister's."

"I should have said the sycamore, the tree, the river and the snow." He was staring at her. "Do you know what I was whistling? That was an Irish thing about a lady who rose from a lake and sat beneath a beech tree, and a man-at-arms came riding by. She enchanted him."

"This is neither lake nor beech tree. I am Elizabeth Selkirk. I think that you are the son of Colonel Matthew Burke."

"Yes. I am Conan Burke."

He dismounted. "If you live at the minister's, I am on my way there. It is snowing harder and harder. Won't you ride Tyrone and let me walk beside, and show me the road?"

"There is no road but only this path. No, I would rather walk."

They moved from the tree together. The path narrowing immediately, she must walk in front while he followed,

leading Tyrone. The snow was indeed falling very fast. She spoke over her shoulder.

"I thought you were at the Murchiesons', by Pine Mountain."

"No. I am going there to-morrow. My father advised my asking for a bed to-night at the minister's. I have been riding pretty well all day."

"Of course we are glad to have you, Mr. Burke," said Elizabeth in her voice of the Virginia uplands, both soft and strong. The others' voices were formed in Scotland, but hers and Tam's in Virginia. She did not feel it necessary—and this, again, was the wilderness—to talk and talk just because there was some one to talk to. If it was "polite" to do so, she knew not that, either. But she felt that he was there. Conan Burke—Conan Burke! Four or five times in seven years Colonel Matthew Burke, coming to Burke's Tract, had stopped a day and night with the minister. "Conan" and "Conan" and "Conan" had come like that into the conversation. "He's fey about that lad!" said Kirstie. Now here was the lad, but it turned out that he was a man! Elizabeth had known that he was older than Tam, who was older than herself, but had failed somehow of realization. Colonel Burke had always said "the boy" and her father had asked, "How is the laddie?" But he was a man—a big man. Conan Burke—and she had dreamed a little about him.

She and Watch, Conan and Tyrone moved through the falling snow. It fell so thick, it fell so fast and so white and so silently. The lay of the land, the river levels, the hills and mountains had disappeared; there stayed only the trees that marched with them and the green river that between the great trunks they saw gliding. In the inner land feelings and thoughts drifted, glided, stood. There might have been written up for both: "This is a dream." "This

is a story." Now and again appeared space where they might travel abreast. Then he stepped beside her, but presently falling back again, she went on wrapped in her gray cloak, the snow like shaken veils about her. He talked more than she, but there was a dream quality in the hour; he felt it, and it kept him silent while the ancient tune he had been whistling ran through and through his head.

But that night at supper at the minister's his tongue was loosened. Philadelphia where he had been at school and had studied the law? Yes, he would tell them about Philadelphia, and did so with Irish vivacity and pith of phrase. They all admired and knew Philadelphia with him; the minister, home from the bedside of Mrs. Ellis, who had not died, Jean, Kirstie and Elizabeth. And pleasant enough it was at the brown table, in the brown, fire-lighted room, with two homemade candles beside; venison and corn-meal mush and a little wheat bread and home brew upon the board. When Philadelphia was passed, there was Williamsburgh.

"Ah, dear!" said Jean Selkirk. "Nancy, Andrew's wife, must hear you. It was her home, and she canna forget it — no, nor should not, any more than we should forget auld Scotland, for all of America!" He told about Williamsburgh and it seemed most gay and metropolitan.

But for all his picturing and the wit with which he painted, and for all that he made them laugh and cry, "Eh, sirs!" he hardly seemed a town gallant. Nor did he seem cut out for the law which he had studied. Law and lawyers were arising fast in the American wilderness. A man might have the American stamp and the lawyer stamp too. Tam, for instance, had both — Tam was going with joy to Williamsburgh this very spring to study law. But Conan Burke had somehow another seeming. Nor was he either pure woodsman like Robin. And as for being like Andrew,

he was not like Andrew. Nor was he like Rob Neill, the sober, intent surveyor.

Said the minister, "And what will you do, Mr. Burke? Settle in Williamsburgh or here in the Valley?"

"I've not decided, Mr. Selkirk. My father would like me to take hold here. He has been the best of fathers to me, and I should like to pleasure him. Only I am not the kind that wants just what he wants in life or from life. So I do not know — I do not know. I do not know that I know what I do want."

He sat over against Kirstie and Elizabeth, where firelight and candle light shone upon him. A big young man, tall and large of frame though without much flesh, with a dark, thin face, with dark hair gathered into a ribbon, but with blue eyes. He had a beak of a nose, and while the lower part of the face showed mirth and whimsy, the upper did not. It was the smiling mouth that first commanded attention, but at the last the nose, the cheek bones, eyes and brow.

John Selkirk regarded him anew across the board. "You like books and your dreams and to live quiet or to wander as you please. But you are not idle or weak, and there is some hidden plan, but as yet you do not know what it is."

Color flowed over the young man's face and his eyes met the other's with a sudden intensity. "How did you know that, sir? It is true!"

"Now and then I can read," answered Selkirk. "But your father wants you to market land, and to use the law for a stepping stone into the political life and future of this Colony, and to see built his town of Donegal."

"Just," said the other. "Those are his aims, and I am not denying that they are large ones. Only mine do not seem to tramp with them . . . and yet I do not know what mine are. He's thinking of taking up another great amount

of land west of Burke's Tract, quite in the mountains yonder. I may go seat it for him."

Supper was ended. When Watch had been fed, the table cleared and the room made neat the women joined the two men by the fire that sang and sang and threw out flames, saffron and coral and azure. They were speaking of the Ohio and whether in the end it would be French or English.

"The French are building more and more forts to the south. My father says there is rumor that the King and his Ministers grow anxious and talk of sending troops over to us —"

"Ah, let us not have war!" said the minister. "No good in the end comes of it."

"No, I fancy it doesn't," answered Conan Burke.

Elizabeth sat upon a stool beside her father. The coral and azure flames lighted her and lighted the visitor on the other side of the wide hearth.

CHAPTER XI

THE next day he rode to Alexander Murchieson's, but three days thereafter dawned the Sabbath. Elizabeth, making ready in the smallest room which she shared with her Aunt Kirstie, thought, "He will be at kirk — but he will go home with the Murchiesons or maybe with the McDowells. Andrew will be asking him too, and Rob. Every family there will be asking him."

The little room held no mirror, held the least indeed of any furnishing. That two women should have in New Virginia, at this period, a chamber at all to themselves was wonder enough. She took her Sabbath gown, her cloak and hood from one of the wooden pegs driven between the logs, and she helped Kirstie and passed judgment upon her, and Kirstie helped her and passed judgment upon her. "You're looking bonny these days! You've got an air of, 'It's the spring of the year, not the drop of it!'"

Mt. Olivet church was built a mile from the minister's house. The family walked there together, staidly, but not entirely without conversation and laughter. In Scotland it had been held against Selkirk that he encouraged "lichtness" in his family, even on the Sabbath day. The Valley of Virginia, less rigid, held that the minister and his family were cheerful folk, and let it go at that. Though indeed the Gellatlys and their clan and the fanatic, Duncan Gow, would use it finally against him, with their own additions. It had turned warmer in the night, the snow was all departed, and the times had swung back to that violet, November weather called Indian summer — a powdery,

smoky violet with sunshine coming through and so still that the world seemed half asleep, and not at all cold. In this air the mountains that sometimes threatened, they stood so close and big, appeared to have removed a space and to be seated each in his own dream. The river, too, went like a lullaby.

"Saint Martin's Summer," remarked Kirstie who remained constitutionally unable to drop all terms used before Calvin.

"Aye, just."

The minister was dressed in his well-saved Sabbath clothes. The women wore their homespun and woven best. Tam had homemade breeches and the stockings that his mother had knitted, but a coat and waistcoat bought with his own earnings from a trader, and silver buckles at his knees and on his shoes. But Robin wore the hunting shirt, caped and belted and skirted, and on his head a cap of squirrel skin. It was likewise his fancy to take his gun with him to church, not that he expected to shoot anything, but that it was always with him and he liked its company. He was the hunter among the Selkirks; hunter and trapper and casual trader, born with all that to the fore and planted now where the sun shone for it and it could come forth and burgeon. Very good to look at was Robin, and the mountains and forests, the river that sang of the canoe, and solitude and the camp fire framed him and expressed him, and he gathered together and vivified and expressed them. He would rest the frontiersman, the backwoodsman. But Tam had another mind and would be the lawyer of the New World. Now Elizabeth leaned to Robin and now to Tam; also to her father, to her mother, to Aunt Kirstie and other members of her family. That is, they were all in her and she in them, but just as Robin or Tam, savoring all, produced his own, or

her Aunt Kirstie did the same, or most of all her father, so with Elizabeth. She stood and moved Elizabeth.

Mt. Olivet church, so small and so rude, was church, cynosure, strong bond of union for nigh two hundred folk. The nearer at hand walked to it, the farther off, if they had horses, rode. If they had not and lived on the periphery of things only Communion Sabbaths might see them. Some drifted even from that. But they that came filled the church. Were all here there must be standing, alike around the room and outside, about the door and windows. Mt. Olivet had a churchyard and in it already eight or ten graves. There were cedars there and a tall tulip tree, a red oak and a pine. Outside the rail fence, copied from the kind that eastern Virginia had devised at an early date, crowded other trees great and small, and here were fastened the horses, saddled and bridled after a most homemade fashion. Here too a ring of stones marked a place where, if the weather was very cold, a fire might be kindled, and through the grove ran Chuckling Branch. So nothing lacked of earth, air, fire and water.

The Selkirks reaching Mt. Olivet early, that being the minister's wont, greeted and were greeted by the neighbors as they came walking and riding in. A man and a woman and a child might be upon one horse, or two women, or a woman with two children, or two men, or a man alone. All dismounted; the women shook out their skirts and straightened the children's apparel. Voices had a Sabbath tone, but were eager and friendly beyond what they would have been in the old and well-filled lands. The church was their capitol, their social nursery, their drawing-room, their kindly meeting place. "How are you?" and "How are you?" and "What's the news?"

Mt. Olivet owned no bell, but the minister looked at his big silver watch, shut it, gazed upward at the gentle blue

sky and, Bible in hand, entered the kirk. Behind him paced his family, reinforced now by Andrew and Nancy with Gregory, Jock and Deborah, and by Rob and Phemie, the former carrying little Jean. It was the signal for all. Men, women and children, the inhabitants of Burke's Tract, pouring into church, filled the narrow, backless benches ranged before the rail, the table, and the high-built pulpit. "Let us pray!"—"Let us sing!"

"Blessed are they that undefiled
And straight are in the way.
Who in the Lord's most holy law
Do walk and do not stray."

Willy Wilson the clerk lined it out. All sang. The little building well-nigh burst with song. John and Esther Gellatly sang with unction, but Duncan Gow sang fiercely, with his eyes glowing against the minister.

"I will read from the Twelfth Chapter of the Epistle to the Romans." The minister read with a deep, sweet passionateness. All but the littlest children listened. In the sermon the mind might stray somewhat, but the reading of the Word must be followed. They sat quite still, even the children being drilled so.

"... to every man that is among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith."

In this congregation North Ireland greatly predominated, North Ireland with Scotland and the northernmost English shires for parents. Midland and southern England and Ireland out of Ulster had some entry, together with Wales and other lands. There was also, faintly, France of the

Huguenot. But massively it presented the aspect that would come to be known as Scotch-Irish and would stamp extents of space and time.

On the whole it was a tall folk that sat in the log church, tall, strong of frame, sinewy and lean rather than full-bodied, and for the most part of a northern and sanguine coloring. Taking them for a sample of their stock, it might be said for them that their faults and their virtues were alike marked. It is more gracious however to talk of the virtues. They were inured to simple, hardy living, which they carried on with industry and at a high level of energy. They were cautious — canny. Surface emotion was not for them, but they knew emotion. It lay deep, with deep passions. They had good minds. Their wills were strong; they possessed courage and great tenacity, and mightily they believed in the individual. Paradoxically, they were canny, and yet they could serve a high romance. They made good, dour adventurers, and they were religious.

In an age of social distinctions, they who had set forth upon the wide sea for America and now were arrived at calling the Valley of Virginia home were chiefly yeomen — small freeholders or tenant farmers in the old country. They were not peasants. With them, though in no such numbers, had come tradesmen and artisans. Some there were besides of the clerkly kind, persons who to-day would be called professional men. Others, too, might be of an "upper" type, offshoots of ancient Lowland families and descendants of Highland chieftains. But the mass was yeomanry, with some education and with sturdiness of frame and character, and all alike were in America, in Virginia, in the Shenando country or the Great Valley, in order to better a condition that in some main feature lacked at home. Otherwise, here and there, they were like enough. They had been clannish at home; they were clannish here.

They were dominantly Presbyterian at home; they were dominantly Presbyterian here.

“Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; or ministry, let us wait on our ministering; or he that teacheth, on teaching; or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness.

“Let love be without dissimulation.”

Elizabeth saw that he had come into church and was sitting, as became any who was late, well at the back, beside John Moore. She kept her face and her eyes reverently upon her father reading the Word — to turn her head and stare would have been unmaidenly and unreligious both — but she knew that Conan Burke had entered softly, had sat down and composed himself to listen. A big man, and waves of warmth and gladness played about him. A braw man —

“Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another; not slothful in business, fervent in spirit; serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer; distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality —”

It all sang, and her heart said, “Aye, aye, aye!” and then, “Conan Burke — Conan Burke — Conan Burke!”

The minister prayed, they had another hymn; he took his text. Sermon began that would last but an hour, for her father preached the shortest of sermons. Her father, her dear father. Conan Burke. All her family glistered to her, the church glistered and the people in it, and the source

of light, sitting there at the back, was Conan Burke. Of course there was God, but God had to come somewhere through the cloud. If He came through just there, who could gainsay him? Elizabeth shut her eyes. She was both here and not here. She and Conan Burke were sifted through all things, hand in hand.

The minister preached and dealt little with terror and much with high joy. A part of Mt. Olivet had that against him — just as a part of Thistlebrae had had it against him — that though he did not do the impossible thing and deny hell, yet he dwelt very little upon it, and seemed to think that it was a much misunderstood place or condition. Others there were who liked it in him. A division threatened, but was not yet accomplished.

The sermon ended. Prayer, hymn, benediction. The congregation went forth into Indian Summer. When something more than an hour had passed the minister would look at his big silver watch and into church all would go again for the afternoon worship. But now dinner under the trees, dinner having been brought with most, and talk and news as among neighbors; in fine another and important scene in the great social act of going to church.

Andrew lived so close at hand that he and Nancy and the children went home to dinner, taking with them Alexander Murchieson, Isaac McDowell and Conan Burke. . . . But when, later, in the short, dreamy, violet-gray afternoon Mt. Olivet closed its door until the next Sabbath and all the folk walked and rode away, eager now to get home, tired though filled with grace, the minister's party found Conan Burke added to it. "May I tarry the night with you, sir?"

"Aye, indeed, Mr. Burke, and welcome!"

"You've known my father for years, and whoever knows him hears 'Conan! Conan!' for all the world like a cock

at dawn. I'll be much obliged if you'll all be saying it when you turn my way." He looked around with his deep, expressive blue eyes.

"Aweel, then, we will, Conan! That's a blessing of the wilderness — folk come soon to the first name."

The sun hung a red ball over Eagle Ridge. It made of the river stained glass, ambers and reds and purples. He walked near her, Conan Burke walked near her. The heart in Elizabeth's bosom felt strangely to her, and all the world grew wondrous. Her cloak caught upon a bush. He released it and as he raised himself their eyes met. It was as though the pure gray and the blue said each to the other, "At long last!"

The mile from church was short. All the color deepened and glowed, through Burke's Tract, in the river James, upon the clearings and the woods, over Eagle Ridge and First Man Mountain. It glowed and burned in the group in which they moved. Each one there was hued like a seraph. A million, million things, facts and deeds and feelings, sown through the ages, rose, a fiery, living swarm, in Conan and Elizabeth. You would think that something must go from them to the others, that to all the day must be heightened. Perhaps it was so, perhaps they all felt a music and a glamor — or not a glamor, a reality — for which they did not account.

But such as it was, to all but the two, it broke for the moment. They were nearing the house. Watch had been left to guard it, and should be bounding to meet them. Instead, they heard him howl — a lugubrious, long, resentful sound.

"He's tied!" cried Robin and pushed ahead.

"Take care, Robin!"

Tam ran up with him. "It will be a pack of vagrant Indians." But the minister said, "Go softly, Tam! They

stopped by, found that we were away; and are camped awaiting us. We'll give them supper as usual and there will be talk. I like my talks with red folk."

Jean Selkirk said dubiously to Kirstie, "There's only one piece of meat and a peck of meal and the evening's milking and the eggs in the little basket and two honeycombs —"

They came in view of the house — close to it, for only so might they see it for the trees. About the door were seated those who had mastered and tied the watch dog. The party included two braves, two squaws, one gun among them, a couple of great bundles for the women to carry, and a lean, silent Indian dog. Watch howled again, and the leading man among the visitors, a tall man with a scar upon his cheek, rose from the ground.

"How?"

"Very well. How?"

"Good. We come from river under setting sun. Tomorrow we turn again, having seen you white men, you English, here. We Shawnees."

Conan spoke beside the minister. "The Shawnees hold toward the Ohio. They're more like to be familiar with the French."

"Do you know Frenchmen, my brother?"

The Indian shot a piercing glance at the inquirer. "Frenchmen? I know some Frenchmen, yes! They are good people. Laugh and strike hands one day with Shawnees. My name Killdeer. These with me Young Panther, Great Buffalo, Leap-the-River. You English prophet, John Selkirk?"

"Aye," said John Selkirk. "Build your fire and make yourselves happy here, or come indoors if you like."

It seemed that they wished to behold indoors and any wonders that might be there, but that being done, they would eat and sleep without. Jean and Kirstie and Eliza-

beth went into the house, to bring up the embers of their own fire and to prepare food. Presently the others all followed, the white men ushering the red, just a little watchfully, observing conduct.

All but the minister. He trusted wholly, and it may be said that far oftener than not results justified his trust. So much oftener than not that he said that trust should be the rule for men to go by, all exceptions to the contrary. He did not seem conscious of it as a rule; it had become his nature.

Not for worlds would Killdeer and his party have betrayed admiration at the contents of the white man's house. They went through silently, only the two squaws now and then sucking in breath. Outside again, they soon had their camp fire. Tam and Robin brought them meat and meal and honey; they had with them dried deer meat. Robin was hail fellow with them, but Tam was stiffer. As the two brothers turned to the house, the younger said, their guests being well behind them, "Tiresome and hungry gypsies!"

"They're not gypsies. They always have purpose in their roving. In the end it's their land."

"Not if their chiefs make treaties and sell us right over it."

"They don't know what they are doing. You and Andrew are different from me."

"You are different from us, you mean. You and father. You in your way because you're a gypsy yourself; father in his way because he's what they call a saint. Andrew and I know what may be in this country and how Killdeer gets under foot. Not that we'd kick him out, either. Buy him out—let him go farther west and farther west and farther west."

"There are plenty that would kick him out."

"Oh, aye, plenty!"

"Just as soon as their own foot won't be crippled by doing it. Well," said Robin, "I seem to remember having been something like Killdeer! But the world doesn't seem ours. If all were like my father we might stay and grow."

The brothers, having now reached the house, turned and stood and looked back to Killdeer's not great camp fire. It was dusk, almost night; the evening star shone in a faintly painted west, the Great Bear might be made out and the suns of Orion. An evening breeze had lifted and was sighing in the pines about the house. The two stood in silence, and Tam was thinking of Williamsburgh, and that he was glad that he was going, and that when he came again to this country it would be different. Say that he returned in ten years. A great many new people by then, and the town that Colonel Matthew Burke forever talked about well started. There must be a town. Farmers scattered over the country were well enough, but towns and cities had larger clappers and sounded farther. Towns and courts where the farmers brought disputes to lawyers. After a while many more towns than one in the Great Valley of Virginia — courts enough, lawyers enough, practise enough! Tam had a keen mind and he and Colonel Burke were great friends. They talked of the future of this world in a way especially their own — the world that was careering somewhat away from the men of the sword and the men of the Church toward the men of the law. Burke thought and said that the coming century would be the Lawyers' Century — all others helping, of course; playing their part, of course. The young man, listening, vowed to himself that by the time he was the age of the talker all Virginia should know and esteem Thomas Selkirk the lawyer. To be king lawyer in the Great Valley that by then would be filled with

folk! To live to be eighty, ninety, and be king lawyer, and see all that was coming to the world!

Thought is an eagle on a crag that sees many an acre at a stroke. The dusk seemed no more dusk, the star no brighter, and few seconds to have been ticked off by the much-prized clock within the minister's house. Robin and Tam went indoors and reported Killdeer and his party satisfied and harmless.

The family of this log manse and Conan Burke ate their supper—slighter than it would have been but for the Indians—then removed to the hearth. But Elizabeth stayed to clear the table and wash and put away the scant and simple tableware. As she worked she listened to the others' talk, then when all was done came to the fire and her seat beside her father. Conan Burke! Conan Burke! The rose and silver, the purple and golden light, flared from him. Song rushed from him, power rushed from him. And all the time he was sitting there quietly, not saying overmuch. And she sat as quietly, a still and staid Scotch maid beside her father. But just once the deep blue eyes and the gray eyes met.

In the morning the Indians went away, and in the afternoon Conan Burke.

A week thereafter it snowed again. He rode from Murchieson's where he was staying and found her driving her cow home from the pasture by Chuckling Branch. Leaving Tyrone, he came to her. "It snows," she said. "Winter now, and byre and fold, away from the wolves."

He moved beside her. "Elizabeth—"

"Aye, Conan."

"You are all golden in your gray cloak in the snow!"

She turned her eyes upon him. She would have said, "You are more golden than gold in your brave, city riding coat!" But her tongue was held.

He put out his hands to hers. "How can you help but know I love you? It's pealing through the mountains; it's dropping roses through the snow!"

"Aye, Conan!"

Each held in arms the other, the snow falling all about them. They kissed, they strained together; the snow fell all about; the cow came up lowing; the cow and Tyrone and Watch followed them to the log house all swirled about with snow, a feather of white smoke lifting from the stone chimney. Within were the father and mother and Kirstie. Kirstie looked up from her work as they entered. Knowledge shot through her.

"Aye, and do not I know what you've come to tell? You've come to tell of June and every wild rose blowing!"

CHAPTER XII

THE Valley of Virginia found a hard winter that year. It snowed and snowed. The river froze so that there was walking across for a month. The wolves grew so bold that for all the penning and folding and watching many a good animal was lost. Wolves came to the very doors of the houses. Folk never went far alone, but if they must travel did so in couples or in small bands, armed and with dogs. No one went anywhere at night. However, though there were roving and hungry beasts, nowhere were to be met roving and hungry Indians. These were all warm in their villages in the far distance, north and south and west. It was a bitter winter, a shut-in one, with little news from beyond the great mountain wall. The snow fell, the streams froze, small were the congregations at Mt. Olivet. At home all must work and make and save. But dreams might find room between the snowflakes, and sit in lovely shapes beside the fire, and hover at night in the little room where slept Kirstie and Elizabeth. Dreams of beauty, dreams of poignant missing, dreams of joined spirits, deeply and really, fully and freely joined.

In March the streams flowed, the snow began to leave, the sun shone every other day and gave some warmth.

"Lo!" said the Valley with almost frightened relief. "The hard winter is over."

In March came Conan, who had come at Christmas for all the snow and the wind.

In April Tam left for Williamsburgh. It was sore, saying farewell for so many years! His mother wept.

"Jean in Edinburgh that never will I be seeing again

until we win to heaven, and now it is Tam. And when it is summer Conan will take Elizabeth away. Andrew and Phemie and Tam and Elizabeth. Oh, I have stood up, but their going pulls me down!"

"It's the hard winter, Jeannie," said Kirstie. "We're all wae and weakened."

Tam fondled her. "Mother, I'm coming back to see you in four or five years, and in time I'm coming to stay and live and work. You be sure to bide for me!"

"That's in the Lord's hands—my biding, my bairn! But I won't be sighing and sobbing like this to daunt you before you're out of door. Now I've stopped. Shirts—you've got four out of our own flax, and good knitted stockings of the yarn, and two coats and two pair of breeches—"

Tam departed, riding a mare that Andrew had given him, his goods bestowed in a bag very neatly shaped by Robin from a deer skin. In his wallet, beside his own savings from pelts and wolves' heads and such, he treasured two guineas from his father, and from Andrew the value of a cow and a calf. And he had a letter from Nancy to her kin, and one from his father to whatever minister of the Presbyterian faith might be in those parts, and letters of much worldly value from Colonel Matthew Burke. So he went, and they missed him sore. In ways he was a more dependable person than was Robin. But they would have missed Robin just as sorely.

In May again came Conan, and this time with him rode his father.

"Elizabeth, my dear!" said Colonel Burke, and kissed her.

He was pleased enough with the match, he told John Selkirk that evening, sitting in the small porch that Robin and Tam had built before the door. Gold? It was con-

venient, but other things at times were more convenient. Such as heart's desire and happiness. He and Conan had land enough, and in the end land was, had always been, and always would be, wealth. Wealth and estimation. As for family — Irish small gentry were a proud enough lot, but he had been in Scotland and thought that Scots ministers were no whit behind them in that! They looked at it so, and their countrymen looked at it so for them.

"There's a pride of office, or assumed office, with the Almighty that I would not bring up for my token —"

"No, not you, sir! Well, put all that aside! Even so, I cannot see that Burkes are better bred than Selkirks. And are health and goodness and beauty and a good wit nothing?"

He spoke with fire, having at Christmas, after a night's dubitation, espoused with fire his son's cause, who else, he saw, must lose his son. Having made up his mind, he made it up romantically and fully. By now he had forgotten that he had ever dreamed of some tidewater heiress for Conan. Much better such a bonny, tall thing as Elizabeth Selkirk, well raised and strong, with courage for the works and dangers of a new-building country! She might give Conan sons of the best, thought Colonel Matthew. Nor did there lack a bluebell wreath and a wild grape tang and a poetry about her. She was not weak; those things were not weak. Her people were highly respectable. It was likely the country would be remembering John Selkirk long after his death as a kind of saint. Selkirk Street! Colonel Burke saw Selkirk Street in the town of Donegal.

So he had blessed Conan and written to the Reverend Mr. Selkirk a manly and graceful letter, and to Elizabeth one that made the bright tears drop down.

And now it was May and he sat with John Selkirk in the tiny porch and looked at the vernal emerald of the

trees climbing First Man Mountain, smelled the blossom of the grape and listened to redbird, catbird, mocking bird and thrush singing delightfully. The river flashed in the sun.

"For all the world it laughs!" quoth Colonel Burke. "And there are Conan and Elizabeth walking beside it under the sycamores."

In two or three days son and father brought up the question of the marriage. "It angers me, sir," said Conan to the minister, "that you cannot marry her and me, standing here before you than whom we'll never meet a priest more after God's heart!"

"There are," said Colonel Burke, "absurdities — especially in new countries! One says such things where one is quite safe to say them."

John Selkirk smiled. "It is so, but they cannot at the moment be changed, so we will not fash ourselves, Colonel! In good time they will be changed, changed even beyond what we now think. And, Conan, I am no better man for you than any other man. Mr. Warham, two days' journey down the Valley, is a fine man, and what are two days' journey in June? Phemie and Rob went them — and now you and Bess — and an Established Church is an Established Church, and on the whole we are not ill tolerated."

"Why, if you are so tranquil about it, sir!" said the Colonel. "As far as the jaunt is concerned there's no denying they'll find it just a delight, being together —"

"I am more tranquil than I used to be about such things," answered John Selkirk. "Though, mind you, I'm not saying that they will not change. They will, changing with many another matter, within and without."

Colonel Burke appeared to be making a calculation in his mind. "Then, sir, I think we had best — always with Elizabeth's consent — set next week for the marriage. I

myself must presently be upon the other side of the Blue Ridge."

The sun shone on the river and Conan and Elizabeth walked beside it.

Next week they rode north, to Beverley Manor, to be married. There went a cavalcade—the groom and the bride, the Colonel, the groom's father; Mr. Andrew Selkirk, the bride's brother, and Miss Mackay, her aunt. Elizabeth clung to her father and mother. "Oh, if I have been wilful and all for myself and have not loved and served you with all my might, forgive me, Father; forgive me, Mother!"

"Oh, whisht, lassie, whisht!" sobbed Jean.

"Forgive us too, my bairn," said her father. "No! You have been a good daughter. May God rise in you from strength to strength!"

Robin rode with them on the minister's horse to the Indian Road, the old Warriors' Way of the past, the worn, wide enough for cart or wagon, way that could be traveled from here to Potomac and back again, and that was called the Pennsylvania Road by the settlers that came down it from that Colony, that would in the future widen and grow to be named the Valley Pike, and again be a road of war. When it was reached, at three immensely tall and old pine trees, Robin kissed his sister soberly, bade the others good-by, and returned to the elder folk

"Tam is gone and Andrew and Phemie, and now me. Oh, Robin, take care of them!"

"I will," said Robin. "I will take them back a deer and turkeys. But Phemie and little Jean, you know, are coming to stay till Aunt Kirstie gets home."

It was leafy June—a ringing and a singing day, with everywhere rustle and ripple and song; blue sky and white galleons afloat in it, golden sun sprites abroad in their

armies, and in the air a high wine, breathed, not drunk. A wedding party should be gay, and this was gay. But there should be a softness in its gayety, a poetry, and this was there also. Colonel Matthew Burke deeply loved his son and had loved his son's mother, long dead. Now beneath all his chat he was moving again by an Irish stream, through Irish woodland, with a dark-haired, blue-eyed woman. Andrew too felt the day turn to a rich autumn in low country and the end of Duke of Gloucester Street, and he and Nancy Milliken walking there with gold and scarlet falling on them. He talked of to-day and to-morrow and material growth, but in his memory rained down the gold and scarlet. And Kirstie Mackay moved with a dead lover in a land above a land.

The Colonel and Andrew rode ahead, and behind them came Elizabeth and Kirstie and Conan. But Kirstie would now and then hasten her steed until he brought her up with the father and brother. Then Conan and Elizabeth would pace alone together on the road now bright sun and now sweet shadow.

"Elizabeth — Elizabeth! I love just to say your name."

"Conan — Conan! That is a bough with five blossoms — a bird with five notes — a star branch with five stars!"

"Elizabeth, you do not know my faults. I have got so many!"

"Not more than mine. I have thought all along, 'I must tell him how proud I am, and set on my own way, and how I fall into anger, and am selfish.'"

Conan laughed. "As if I cared!" And she laughed also. "As if I cared!"

That forenoon in ten miles they counted as many cabins, and one or two veritable houses, though always of logs. "The land is getting settled," said Colonel Matthew Burke with complacency. Andrew nodded. "Cannot you see,

rising like a colored cloud, stone houses and brick houses, crossroads and towns, farms and orchards and herds? It hangs and settles on the open, in among the forest."

"Scotch sight!" said the Colonel. "But all the same, it will come."

A little later, by a brawling stream, under a hill covered with cedar, they met a small covered wagon, a man on horseback and two men walking. All drew up and exchanged speech. Those moving south proved to be for Burke's Tract; the horseman, a Mr. Munro, his wife and child in the wagon, the two men walking, his servants, come over ocean with him, and the whole captured for Colonel Burke by Mr. Campbell, who now operated upon the Potomac rather than at Burke's Fort. The proprietor of Burke's Tract made himself known.

"Ah, Mr Campbell told me that I might find you on the road! Well, sir, I've bought land from you, but can you tell me if I have bought happiness?"

"If you do not find it, sir," said Burke with dignity, "the unhappiness will be in your own small star, not in the great star of this country. We"—he indicated himself and his company—"we scarce seem unhappy, I think!" He could not hold himself stiff, but slipped into glinting and sparkling geniality. "We are a wedding party. My son, Mr. Burke, and his bride, Miss Elizabeth Selkirk—Miss Christiana Mackay—Mr. Andrew Selkirk. All of Burke's Tract—and quite otherwise than unhappy, Mr. Munro!"

Munro continued saturnine. "Pardon me, sir; my spirit will come finally. But I and mine have had a hard voyage and none so easy going in this bragged-of America And the British Isles, sir—the British Isles are distraught! The woes there drag upon my soul!"

"Aye, there promises trouble with the Pretender—"

"The Pretender, sir! Prince Charles Edward—"

"Oh, your cockade is white! I beg your pardon. But forget it, Mr. Munro, forget it here! In that quarter the least said, the soonest mended. Here in Virginia you may think in your head and feel in your heart, but your tongue must remember King George! King George!"

"So I have been told—but that at least I should not see redcoats nor wake to find them at the door."

One of the walking men muttered to the other, "No—only redskins."

"But," continued Munro, "I must not delay a wedding party! My wife, too, is sore fatigued and would get to our journey's end. I am told that we'll find an ordinary by the spur of First Man Mountain, hard by the two hundred acres of my land."

"A small one—Davis'—just a cabin, you know," said the Colonel cheerfully. "You've a very good bit, if Mr. Campbell has parted with that piece by the spur. Well, Mr. Munro, we're glad to welcome you to Burke's Tract, that's as fine a land and neighborhood as there is in the world! This gay, wilderness air will take out all your rubs and bruises, of the spirit as of the body. But I would counsel you, my dear sir, not to be too frank, even in the wilderness."

"I hate marching under false colors," said Munro. "But I will remember that it is a Whig and Presbyterian region. No offense to you, sir!"

The wagon and its convoy drew south and the wedding party north, along the old red man's war trail.

"Now how did Campbell bag him for the upper Valley and Mt. Olivet congregation? But variety's a good thing!"

They rode beneath the cedars, by the dashing stream. Kirstie was back in Scotland. The man she had not married had been worse than Episcopalian—Catholic. Catholic and Jacobite. They could not marry—from both sides

had sprung giants to say them nay. And now he was dead. What were those giants, anyway? Kirstie, riding with her eyes upon the reins in her hand, was away with that man in an inner land. Those silly giants had not kept them apart, nor had silly death!

Conan and Elizabeth, riding behind the others, checked their horses. A stone was in the shoe of Tyrone. Conan, dismounting, removed it, then came for a moment to his bride's side. The others were fifty yards ahead, and more-over a curtain of wild grape swung down from a cedar.

"Elizabeth, bend down and kiss me!"

Elizabeth did so, then, her hand upon his shoulder, breathed, "Look!" and nodded across the stream. Half in shadow, half in shine, there among fern and young trees, stood at gaze a stag and doe and a fawn. They stood so happy, they stood so still, at wonder perhaps but without fear, across the water, in the June glory—the woodland family.

CHAPTER XIII

FIRST the Valley of Virginia had been counted as of Spotsylvania County; then it was in Orange County, Orange going with a fine indefiniteness south toward the Carolinas and west toward the setting sun; then out of Orange were created Frederick and Augusta, the first leaning upon Potomac, the second upon James, but careering sublimely, when it came to the west, over Alleghanies and outward. Augusta built herself a log courthouse, eighteen by thirty-eight feet, and put a minute jail thereby, and a pillory and stocks and a whipping post. The courthouse was just finished; the stumps of forest trees hewed away stood rawly around; forest trees left standing, oaks and pines, seemed to whisper through all their great boles and leafy heads, "What is here? What is here?"

Near at hand stood among trees two or three log houses, and before the largest swung a sign, stating that here was McClannahan's Ordinary. A very few persons moved about; several horses stood hitched to a rack. To-morrow would be court day, and the sheriff and collector of revenues, an important person, and the clerk — another important one — and one or two others of county prominence had come in the day before. Down a stream a little way off stood a mill. This was William Beverley's Mill Place, given to Augusta for ground for courthouse, gaol and appurtenances; the beginning of a town that was not yet, the town of Staunton. Sunshine swathed the place; all around rolled the rich, great Valley; east and west sprang the

long, broken and peaked, azure and dark pearl, beautiful mountains.

The party from the banks of the James drew rein. It was fresh morning, four days from First Man Mountain and the minister's house. A thunder storm and a swollen stream had made one delay — and a hospitable house that would not hear of haste past, even to a wedding, another — and a very bad stretch indeed of the Pennsylvania Road a third. Moreover, the Colonel was all consideration for the comfort and rest of Elizabeth and Miss Mackay, and declared for leisurely travel. The world was so beautiful, this June weather, why haste through it, when love was along? The night before had been passed at John Lewis', by the two hills that that Ulsterman had named Bessy Bell and Mary Gray.

O Bessy Bell and Mary Gray!

They were twa bonnie lasses —

They biggit a bower on yon burn-brae,

And theekit it ower wi' rashes.

Now they were on their way to the glebe and the parsonage that was a comfortable double cabin. McClannahan's, and something to drink, and Matthew Burke wanted a word with James Patton if he were here; and he was, for that was his horse.

James Patton, colonel of militia and sheriff of Augusta, came at Burke's shout out of the ordinary. He was a powerful, big man, who was to name a village and die by the tomahawk. "Ha, Colonel!" "Ha, Patton!" They talked together. A servant man brought claret and brandy. Kirstie and Elizabeth drank the first, the men the second. None dismounted — it was yet some distance to the parsonage — but they became for the few minutes of this halt the center of a small, interested gathering.

"A wedding party, clean from the James?"—"Oh, 'tis Conan Burke!—Miss Selkirk? Is her father John Selkirk? Well, she's a bonny, tall sprig!"—"Good day, Colonel! Good day, Mr. Burke!—Mr. Andrew Selkirk? Pleased to meet you, Mr. Selkirk!—Your servant, ladies!" "Fair morning and fair errand! I propose, gentlemen, that we drink to the bride."

That was Mr. Gabriel Jones, the lawyer. They drank. Elizabeth, sitting Whitefoot, Andrew's ten-year-old chestnut, smiled down upon them, and thanked them with a bright cheek but a steady gaze. Throughout her life she was capable of a strong good fellowship with women and men, the good beasts, the trees, the hills. It was her Valley, her folk, her greater family. She felt comradeship, community, neighborhood, friendliness. And though to-day there breathed about her a bright shyness, she was never lass or woman to hang her head and attempt a foolish screen. She sat there tall and straight and blissful and composed enough, and Colonel James Patton and Mr. Madison the clerk, and Mr. Gabriel Jones, and Mr. Buchanan, who was Patton's son-in-law, and one or two others drank her health and happiness. She said, "I thank you, sirs," and Conan took her hand, and they looked what they were, blessed humanity. And then the wedding party rode on from McClannahan's Ordinary and the knot of First Citizens of Augusta.

They had some distance to go before they came to the glebe and the parsonage, and when they reached the latter Mr. Warham, the parson, was in the fields and must be sent for. He came at last, and under a vast oak tree before a substantial two-room and lean-to cabin the Established Church united in the bonds of matrimony Conan Burke and Elizabeth Selkirk.

Kirstie folded her niece in her arms. Andrew kissed

her. "May you be very happy, Bess, and never forget that I am by you!" Colonel Matthew Burke embraced his daughter. "Elizabeth, I've worshiped him, and now I've you also to worship!" Conan kissed Kirstie, "Aunt Kirstie!" He and Andrew shook hands. "Brothers, Conan!" "Brothers, Andrew!" He embraced his father. "Father, if I can be to my son what you've been to me —"

Mr. Warham kissed the bride, the Warham family added their felicitations, the indentured youth grinned from beyond the circle of the oak. Colonel Burke and the parson spoke apart, with a glint of gold from hand to hand. This was no unimportant linking to be solemnized for a beggarly six-shilling fee!

The parsonage of a sudden looked sunnier, wealthier. There were only a parish, a glebe and a parsonage, not yet a church. For what could you do when nine tenths of your parishioners were Dissenters and had their own stout, good church at Tinkling Spring, nay, were about to build a Stone Church? There was also a vestry with considerable duties, but more than half of the vestrymen worshiped at Tinkling Spring, conforming just enough to be vestrymen and that was all. Once overtop the Blue Ridge and descend into the west, and the very air became Presbyterian. Not that Episcopal zephyrs did not breathe, nor that there lacked a few other currents, but the stiff breeze roared Calvin and Knox! Calvin and Knox! Mr. Warham did as he could, with the Church of England and of Virginia for prop, with prerogatives such as this of marriage, with his support, his glebe, parsonage and salary tithed from those who themselves went to the Tinkling Spring church. But he felt always the air as of a chilly day, as if he needed a great-coat against it.

To-day struck sunnier, with two golden guineas in hand, and this a genial party — genial for all that the bride and

her brother were, he was told by the great man, Colonel Burke, children of a Scots minister with a meetinghouse or kirk called Mt. Olivet on the James. He offered the company wine and they obligingly drank with him. Next he spoke of the sun at noon and of dinner and his poor best, and they said that if they did not put Mrs. Warham out — They did not; the new land, the so thinly settled folk, practised hospitality with the fervor with which the Middle Ages used humility. They ate in the small, rudely fitted cabin and thought no worse of it, being used and well used indeed to such habitations. The Colonel, Mr. Warham and Andrew talked; the others sat silent, attentively listening or straying afar.

“Sixteen hundred tithables in Augusta County — two shillings poll tax — and there are roads and bridges and wolf bounty and the courthouse and gaol and fifty other things to be considered. We shall have to increase the tax.”

“There will be a protest, sir, that will echo from Alleghany to Blue Ridge.”

“Sixteen hundred tithables and their households! We’re getting filled, Mr. Warham; we’re getting filled!”

But Mr. Warham chose to be doubtful. “Much of my life, sir, was spent in London. Seven hundred thousand souls there, sir! When I stand at eve, at my door here, and nowhere mark a light of any house, but hear the whip-poorwill, the owl, the wildcat and the wolf — I wonder, sir, and am lonely.”

Andrew spoke. “It was ever so in all beginnings. But when I came over the Blue Ridge eight years ago, you may be sure, sir, there were far enough from sixteen hundred tithables in New Virginia! If we continue to grow in proportion, reckon for yourself where our children may be! We’ll crowd the French yet from the Ohio and those Lakes we hear of!” He helped himself to corn bread and

bacon. "I'm hopeful for this country, Mr. Warham! Sometimes I have a vision, and then I see Londons and Edinburghs and Belfasts *here!*"

"Exactly!" came in Colonel Burke. "Andrew, we shall have them, in America, in Virginia, in the Valley!"

Mr. Warham said timidly, "Of course, too, we must build toward the City of God."

"Of course — of course!"

The parson's wife brought a dish of wild strawberries. Dinner ended, all went out of doors, and the horses were brought up from where they grazed upon the rich, June grass. The sun rode high above the vast oak. Plans already formulated were definitely laid upon the green. To-morrow was court day and both the Colonel and Andrew Selkirk would attend. But now they meant to escort Miss Mackay to John Lewis' where the three would sleep this night and where Kirstie might rest to-morrow. The day after, or the day after that at latest, they would take the road back to Burke's Tract, First Man's Mountain, and the river James.

But the just wedded pair, though they would go now with them to John Lewis', would not bide there, but would this same day make their own start up the long, long Valley to the minister's house which was to be their home until their own was built. Gang their ain gate, riding, riding by themselves, through the June weather, making shelter at night.

So it was. The Lewis household, out by the two hills, welcomed the returning cavalcade and made much of the wedded couple. Good food and wine were put in a bag and fastened by Conan's saddle. His gun was looked to, his powder horn and shot pouch. He had besides a handsome dirk, and he carried a small bag of clothing, and Elizabeth the like, and for fear of misadventure, storm and delay

in the open, they had in a roll a cloak and a plaid. Tyrone and Whitefoot were fed and rested. Again there occurred embracings, farewells, laughter, blessing. Then in the bright afternoon Conan and Elizabeth departed. Twelve miles up the Pennsylvania Road they would come to the McClannahans', and that would be a good place to stop the night. All watched them out of view, around the hill. Kirstie, standing with clasped hands, sent after them a prayer. They were so beautiful, Kirstie thought, the tall young man, the tall young woman! "Be happy! Be happy! Be happy!" breathed Kirstie.

The sun set, the moon rose, the Lewis household prepared for rest. To-morrow was court day, and all must stir early and the men ride or walk in early to Augusta Courthouse. Most of them would ride. Horses appeared almost as soon as men — as white men — in the Shenando country. The Indians had cleared for the buffalo and the elk much champaign, much great and good grazing, and therefore hunting ground; the elk and the buffalo, for some reason none knew what, were gone save for remnants; the Indians, none knew why, no longer dwelled in the country, though they traversed it, and occasionally, with passionate oratory, laid claim to it. But the cleared land and the grass remained, and sang to folk from Albion and Scotia and Erin of flock and herd and drove. But few yet were the horses and few the kine to what would be. All life, human and domestic animal, was scanty; all buildings were small and rude.

A good-sized family crowded any log house. When there was company, it crowded further, that was all. John Lewis' house was considered spacious. Kirstie slept with the daughters in the loft; below, Colonel John — a dozen Colonial offices conferred the title of "Colonel" — and Mrs. Lewis had their curtained bed and there was space in the

main room and the second room and the kitchen room for the four sons, Thomas, Andrew, William and Charles, and for John Lewis' brother, Thomas the surveyor, and for Colonel Matthew Burke and Mr. Andrew Selkirk, and the Judge of the Court, Andrew Pickens, and for Israel Christian and one or two beside. Lewis' indentured servants and a Negro whom he owned slept in the stable. When the flock and shuck beds gave out, one might lie on a cloak, on the puncheon floor. Most men and women dreamed of larger houses at last, as they dreamed of fenced pasturage, of roads where now were paths, and great cornfields where now lay ragged patches, but in the meantime this was a raw, new kingdom. Fifteen years ago one would have had trouble to find even a one-room cabin! But some folk thought and continued to think the one-room cabin enough, and the brush fence and climbing corn patch enough, and the narrow path under or over the hill enough.

Dawn broke over Bessy Bell and Mary Gray, over Augusta Courthouse, over the Valley. Family and guests at John Lewis' rose, made their toilet, turned out of the house into a splendid day while the house was reddeed up, had breakfast, homely and abundant. Then from Lewis' stable that was as big as his house, the young white men bound to him for their passage to Virginia brought the horses of such as were going to court. They departed, Lewis and three of his sons, two of them riding double, Colonel Matthew Burke and Andrew Selkirk, Thomas Lewis, Andrew Pickens, Israel Christian and one or two others.

The morning was so dew-spangled, so sunshiny fresh and filled with song, so divine! Kirstie Mackay was glad for Conan and Elizabeth somewhere on the Valley road. She stood and looked at the mounting sun, and listened to a sweet bird up in a tulip tree covered with emerald and

orange cups, then turned and went indoors and fell to helping the women of the family with the work. As all worked all talked, and it was the fortunes in Virginia yesterday, to-day and to-morrow, and it was old life in Ireland and Scotland. Of how all things bettered, save where in some matters they worsened. Of homesickness for old ways and folk and soil, and how at first it nearly killed, but now at last Virginia was home. Only one never forgot — naturally not! Tears came still, said Mrs. Lewis, and Kirstie answered, "Aye, they fall! Where you're born and spend your youth and first womanhood is aye home. But the bairns that are growing up will feel just that for Virginia if life shakes them forth from it."

"Aye, they do not understand us now when we talk of what they do not know. But every little while comes by one fresh from Donegal or Londonderry or Antrim, and then we have a crack."

"You are better off there than we," said Kirstie, "seeing that three fourths of the new folk coming in are from those parts of Ireland. Scots from Scotland at a jump are none so frequent. It's rare comes one from Edinburgh or Dumfries. And as for Thistlebrae, we've seen none that has seen it this long nine years!"

"That that I weary for, is a sight of the gray sea."

"Aye! For me there's a tree and a house and a long, long moor—"

The men rode to the courthouse and found a number there before them, and a number coming in at the same time, and a number appearing later in the day. McClannahan's Ordinary did a great business, as did the booths erected among the stumps and standing trees and authorized to sell whisky at six shillings a gallon. Barbados rum brought eight shillings. By afternoon many about the courthouse and some within had drunk too much. There arose

scenes of affection and many, too many, handshakes, and there arose brawls. A man or two was knocked down, a man or two clapped under arrest. It was a hard-drinking age, and the Valley of Virginia drank with the rest. Only the Indian, however, did it utterly madden.

A party of these camped near the courthouse to-day, a hunting band from the Alleghany border, straying east to see what might be seen and due to face west again on the morrow. Five or six came to the courthouse and stood and gazed at the white sachems and their council house and doings. Ordinary and booths were under bond not to sell whisky to Indians, but by noon one of these hunters had somehow obtained it. He began to dance—a war dance, *solus*—then gave his war whoop and ran amuck. White men and his own friends captured him before he had done tragic mischief and he was fastened to a tree beside the gaol until he should recover. Here he raved until the drunken ecstasy dropped into melancholy and silence and at last sleep.

Meantime, in the court, John Preston proved his importation from Ireland, with his wife Elizabeth, William his son, and Letitia and Ann his daughters, at his own charge, in order to partake of his Majesty's bounty for taking up land. Mr. Gabriel Jones was qualified as attorney to transact his Majesty's affairs in this county, and Edward Boyle for damning the court and swearing four oaths in their presence was stocked for two hours and fined twelve shillings. Claims were allowed for Indian damages, and provision made for shelter and provender during terms for the horses of justices, attorneys and officers. Colonel Matthew Burke and Mr. Andrew Selkirk waited on the court with the petition of the inhabitants of Burke's Tract, for a road to be cleared from Mt. Olivet to Pine Mountain. The county levy was taken up. A will was proved and

admitted to record. Two men were presented for Sabbath breaking. One had continued on the Day the building of his house; the other had driven hogs over the Blue Ridge. A woman, convicted of the theft of a blanket and a hen and a cock, must receive twenty-nine lashes upon the bare back. Constables were appointed. John Buchanan, Samuel Gay and others qualified as captains of militia. William Beverley brought suits against Patrick Campbell and George Robertson. Suits were often brought—personal frays giving way, but only to frays at law.

Under a pine tree, resinous, and fragrant, and murmurous as a sea, stood the Shawnees who had not bought fire water, and watched the coming and going, the abiding and riding away.

CHAPTER XIV

SHE wore a linsey dress, skirt and full overgown, short sleeves with a ruffle, kerchief of bleached linen fastened at the bosom with an old golden brooch of her mother's, and a wide straw hat of home weaving—all in the mode of the year in which the Selkirks had quitted Scotland. Her hair, brown to gold and gold to brown, was brought into a great knot at the nape of her neck and fastened there with pins bought last year of a trader. She had a wide cloak woven of wool from Andrew's sheep, but this was rolled at her saddlebow, not being needed in this weather. The saddle was likewise of home manufacture.

He wore a bottle-green riding dress much nearer to present fashions than hers, having been shaped in Williamsburgh from a pattern that had left London last year. His cravat was lace, his own hair was gathered into a club and tied with a black ribbon. He had riding boots of fine leather and riding gloves which he would not wear when he saw that she had none. His shirt was fine, his buckles of gold. His saddle with holsters had been made by the best saddle maker east of the Blue Ridge.

Their eyes were dreamily, yearningly happy, their lips trembled into smiles, they sat erect and supple; off stepped Tyrone and Whitefoot upon the Pennsylvania Road, that had been the Warriors' Trail, that would be the Valley Pike.

A green hill covered Lewis' house. They were alone until presently they came to a stream and a grist mill. The wheel was turning, the water splashing; the miller and his helper standing in the door passed the time of day. A

brood of children played around. Two miles farther they came to a smithy, a rude small place indeed, and no fearful amount of business, though some business. After this a rolling land, here wild, rough grass, here brushy slopes where a dwarf growth was taking the place of the ancient forest that had been burned away. Where it stood, as it had stood for millennia, there was little undergrowth—an infinity of colonnades and a fairly clean floor. The Pennsylvania Road went up and down, up and down; innocent of grading, innocent of circumvention, so narrow that a wagon filled it, with pits and grass and stony ledges, wrinkled and rough. But it did not, like the new roads the county was clearing, lay plain upon the surface, scratched hardly the depth of a sod. It lay slightly sunken.

Conan said, "We've never worn it so, but Indians have, using it for the Almighty knows what long, long time! Sometimes when I journey this way I see them, Elizabeth, and I think, 'You may have traveled this road before the Scots and the English went to Ireland, and before the ships sailed up the Powhatan and the English named it James and built Jamestown, and before Columbus sailed from Spain. You may have been walking this way when Ireland had her own kings, when there lived the blessed Saints Patrick and Columba, when the Romans took Britain.' And I think and think, 'It's a worn old way and their footfalls are light and never in hosts.' I shut my eyes and see them moving there before us."

"You are like my father. You have kindness for them."

"If we wrong them it will come back upon us."

They rode by open grass and brushy hills. The sun was westering fast. Now they said a few words; now they simply rode together. They came to a cabin set a bowshot from the highway. An enormous walnut tree gave it shade, the young corn was springing in the steep field behind, a

vine clambered over a kind of arbor; upon a bench beside the stone chimney stood two hives and one heard the cackling of geese and the tinkling of a cowbell. There seemed to be flowers about the door, and a red-gold sunshine, very fine and still, washed the whole.

"Jacob Scholl's. It is the same down the Valley where there are more Germans. They do not keep it bare, raw and forlorn about them."

"It looks as though its name were home."

"'Home.' You are home to me, Elizabeth. My home!"

"You are mine!"

They left behind them Jacob Scholl's. The land ran down to a stream and a dark wood of pine, cedar and hemlock. When they forded the stream it was as though Tyrone and Whitefoot stepped sedately through broken and rolling rubies and topaz and amethysts and sapphires, all the casket of the west. When they came up to the wood the trees stood like spires and pyramids and domes, solemn and dark, with marvellous lights between. David McClanahan's house was pitched just beyond this piece of ancient forest.

Conan spoke, "A little way through here is a ruined Indian hut. Some hunter built it not so many years ago. My father and I found it last year. It is clean and in a fair place, by a spring; and a bank curves around so as to hide a fire."

They rode on, keeping silence, while the west glowed more and more. Then she said, her utterance coming out of the wave of thought and feeling that flowed from the one to the other.

"Quiet. I love the quiet. It is bliss to be so together, out of company into a world of company. Conan, let us find the Indian hut."

They turned their horses from the Pennsylvania Road

which here was itself but a track in the forest. The earth lay shadowy bronze and violet, needle-strewn and resilient. The pines, the hemlocks, the cedars showered down fragrance that did not cloy, that had in it eternal stimulus. The wind maintained an organ tone. They rode a mile into the wood where was little undergrowth so that they went easily, only keeping a certain rhythmic turning. The trees were vast, the air cool but not cold, they were facing the west and the ends of vistas seemed hung with roses, roses and a deep blue flower.

They arrived at the old hunter's shelter and it was as Conan had said. Some tempest had broken away half the bark roof and all the air and light and fragrance swept the interior, but yet was there shelter from wind or dew or rain or snow. It was set in a little dell and a high bank, laurel covered, curved about it like a guarding arm. Near at hand a spring gushed forth from fern and moss and ran away through the forest in a span-wide stream, and a mosaic of darkened stones showed where the fire had been built. All was clean, wind-swept, rain-washed, sun-dried, and inexpressibly retired, alone. It had magic in it.

The two dismounted and Conan eased Tyrone and White-foot of saddle and bridle. Grass grew upon the streamlet's either bank. He loosed the horses to graze their fill and while he did so Elizabeth gathered pine cones, dried moss and branches for their fire. Flint and steel and tinder—the spark caught, the blaze arose. They made no great fire, but enough. As the bright flames sprang up the tint faded in the sky. Afar they heard a whippoorwill.

They stood, listening to their own hearts, hushed in their own beauty. The heated air, the gauzelike smoke, beating up, wrapped them as it were in a spiral. They seemed one form. Now he whispered to her and she to him, but they said little, they only rested together.

The whippoorwill and the owl cried, the fireflies began to flicker in their multitudes greater than the waves of the sea.

The two moved apart, brought plaid and wallet and sat down to their supper. They had bread and meat and wine and sweet cakes that John Lewis' daughter had made for them. When they had finished supper a golden full moon stood in the sky. In a June eve, in a lifted country, in the deep wood, the warmth of the fire made itself welcome. They fed it with cones and twigs, and a rosy and azure flame lit fitfully the bark shelter, the streamlet where it ran clear, the trunks of trees, their own forms and faces. Conan called Tyrone who lifted his head from his grazing and came up the stream and Whitefoot followed. He fastened them to trees at hand, then placed the saddles and luggage and his gun within the hut. It stood just behind them and, doorless, was filled with the firelight as a cave with the sea. When he returned to her Elizabeth was standing in the moonlight and the firelight, her face lifted, her eyes upon a great star that was crossing an opening above. "Maybe it is ours —"

"So we go forever together —"

They sat down beside the fire, close each to the other. Their voices murmured as low as the stream and as old a song.

CHAPTER XV

ON an autumn day in the year 1751 Stephen Trabue, a man past the noon of life but wiry, active and in health, found himself in the Great Valley and nearing from the north the just established town of Staunton. He was driving a wagon, and with horses named Bob and Dick, and beside the wagon trotted Anthony his dog. But the dog was a great grandson of Anthony the first, and Bob and Dick were only named for the two with whom he had commenced as wagoner, and the wagon was not the same. Moreover, before him creaked and bumped another and a greater wagon, drawn by four horses, and behind him came a third, his own size, and behind this, at a slow pace, a dozen pack horses. Three drivers and four or five men beside, wagons and packs filled with goods, and the whole a trading company all the way from Philadelphia,—all, that is, save Trabue who had joined it at the newly born town of Winchester in the lower Valley.

Charles Jordan, his kinsman, the man driving the four-horse wagon and the head of the concern, had invited him to cast in his lot; younger men were crowding him out in Henrico County, and Trabue thought, "I'd better change and make a new life while I can." So here he was, and liking Charles and Charles liking him, and the third owner, Walter Webster, now driving the third wagon, being likewise congenial, the trading company achieved a harmony which did not always attend such enterprises. The others were younger men, working for wages. Jordan and Webster were old traders, and Trabue had done his share in a small way with his own wagon, carrying to Richmond or to

Williamsburgh at odd times skins of the beasts that had fallen before him. But he had never done anything so massive as this, and in a quiet way it excited him.

The wagons, the packs, bulking above and to either side of the horses, held quantities of goods, such goods as white pioneers would want, and goods that red men would want. The "white" goods might be disposed of to an item between Winchester and the James; the "red", that rested deep in the wagons and deep in the packs, were for over the James, for the southwest trail, and the Cherokee country. Out of white man's territory, right and left of the Pennsylvania Road, would come in exchange lodging and food for man and beast, "lloodores", pistoles, dollars, shillings and pence, and out of Cherokee country the finest of their furs and skins.

It would be summer before they returned this way. Trabue felt the magnitude of his embarkation pleasurably. And the immense Valley, with this long, long road like a spine through it, and vague old trails, and just cleared new apologies for roads diverging from it at long distances, right and left,—he had never really traveled it before, only looked down upon it from some height of the Blue Ridge and thought that he must some day. Now he was here, gazing toward the Blue Ridge instead of from it. It stretched far off and vaporous blue, and on the other hand ran forever the Alleghanies, and between rolled the Valley, ten leagues wide, maybe; and when he looked south the great basin continued so far as the eye could carry and then rolled farther on into mere violet space. Trabue whistled an old, old air learned at Monacan Town.

Up a long hill and down it, and Staunton appeared before them. Courthouse, gaol, two ordinaries, five or six log dwellings: that was Staunton. Augusta Street and New Street, four squares, each holding two acres further divided

into half-acre lots, and all, save at the very heart about the courthouse, unbuilt upon as yet. So far the chief purchasers of lots were Alexander McNutt, Joseph Kennedy, Robert McClannahan and Thomas Paxton. The price ran around three pounds the half acre,—the Virginia pound being considerably less than the English. The county's commissioners were Robert Breckinridge, Robert McClannahan and Andrew Lewis. Upon the purchase of a lot the owner, standing upon his possession, received from a commissioner a handful of the soil, all after the ancient *livery of seizin*.

Staunton made no great show, but the soft October day wrapped it in a king's mantle, and it breathed and lay, a town and viable! A town of any size, a town of any kind, arising here constituted a milestone in the march of history. Small size and sylvan rudeness of buildings, stumps of trees around, scratches upon the earth called streets and lanes, made no difference. Here at last stood a town.

The three traders and the young men with them gazed with interest. Charles Jordan had been through here two years before and then it was not half the size. Not half! "It's a mill race—the way folk come into this Shenando country! They come in grown and they come in children. Then babies are born here, a mort of them, every year. *They* come from the sky and are Virginians right away! The Lord has shut all trouble away from this Valley and just left it to grow. Yes. He's given it a space of peace."

The teams were resting a bit, the three traders standing beside the greatest wagon, and all at a crossroads, a vague narrow track coming from the direction of the Blue Ridge and striking just here the Pennsylvania way. Now in view upon this road, if it might be called so, out of a heavy shadow of trees, appeared quite a company of men.

"Who are these?" demanded Jordan. "More than a dozen of them, on horseback and afoot."

"They're white men and black men."

"Somebody's bringing over the mountains Negroes for sale."

"That's a novelty here! But it was obliged to come."

"They'll never have anything like the number they have the other side the Ridge. Nothing near it! They aren't going to raise tobacco—and it's a different kind of life and folk, anyhow!"

"That's true. But first and last, there'll be a considerable number. Just as soon as they can pay for them, for it's easier to have some one do the work for you than it is to do it yourself. That's human nature! White man's nature, red man's nature, and I reckon black man's nature."

Trabue said, "It seems for a while to be easier, but then it's seen to be harder. It's the hardest thing that is and against nature, and red, white and black will come to see it."

"Maybe —"

"Yes, they will!"

By this time the company from the east had moved down upon them. Three white men rode, three walked; ten black men and three women walked. The white men had guns and other weapons. In addition there were two dogs along. But the black folk were peaceable enough—none of them Negroes just out of a slaver, but used to Virginia, the most born here and calling it home; tractable and assuming their lot to be according to nature. They were walking westward because a great estate had been broken up by the death of the planter and his Negroes had been sold, and these were bought on a speculation by the adventurous and imaginative three on horseback. Over the Blue Ridge was prospering, folk said. Carry these darkies over there and

sell them at a good price because of their rarity and the beginning need for them. So here they were, a good, cheerful set, and good, cheerful men convoying them. Two of the black men were brothers and anxious not to be separated. One of the women had left children behind her and occasionally mourned aloud, but for the rest they seemed hopeful of change. They were decently clothed, in health, and evidently not ill treated, according to the canon of the time, which had definite ideas as to what constituted, and what did not constitute, ill treatment. At any rate, they sounded cheerful in the autumn day; there seemed even a kind of cheerful understanding between them and the men who had bought and would sell. They could laugh and they could sing.

The two companies met at the crossroads. Halt, rest, greeting, introduction and exchange. One of the horsemen and Trabue disinterred an ancient meeting.

"You and your wagon and your dog and the great mud-hole three miles this side of Richmond—"

"Yea—yea! You had a monster cask of tobacco and were stuck there."

"You helped me out. I sold that tobacco and went overseer to the Wide River place, and then I left that, and now I'm carrying Negroes to market. That Staunton down there?"

"Yes."

"By G—d, it's a small one! Well, are we going on together?"

They went on, as much together as they must or might be in so narrow a road. And here was Staunton and the Queen's Head and McClannahan's Ordinary, and a rude and trampled yard and a long shed where horses and wagons might rest, and those nine Negroes, and the hired men who must guard for all traders. And here was what crowd to

admire the place could afford, for the double train coming down the hill and up the hill had been an imposing one, seen afar and prepared for in a rush. Everybody loves excitement of one sort or another, so it be properly spaced. For all that the Valley was filling, there happened great sweeps of hours when Staunton, that might have been held on the palm of a giant's hand, lay as dull and unaccompanied as if the giant slept and his castle slept. It was true that in two days' time there would be court, and fifty or more coming in. But here, out of the autumn haze, was excitement without waiting any longer.

The traders tarried for Court Day, but sold in the meantime all that they could. Inhabitants of Augusta living within ten miles of Staunton heard of the arrival and rode in, so that they might be beforehand with the crowd and purchase to their ease and advantage. Jordan, Webster and Trabue disposed of much goods, and two Negro men and a woman found comfortable homes.

Court Day dawned and Staunton was crowded.

The court this term gave three permissions to build grist mills. There were tried two assault and battery cases, one offense having occurred in the churchyard while a woman was being buried. A miller was presented for overcharges. There was a slander case. Susan Barbary was bound over to keep the peace for putting James Armourer in fear of his life. Three hundred and odd wolf heads were entered. Complaints were heard as to the "borrowing" of horses. For unlawful selling of whisky Gorion Proudfeute prayed for a whipping in place of a fine. Twenty-nine lashes to be given at once. Jeremy Jeremy, servant of Alexander Stuart, had run away and been absent six weeks. Jeremy Jeremy was adjudged to serve Alexander Stuart fifteen months beyond his contracted time. Jael Tierney was convicted of slaying her bastard child. In the grand jury sat

Archibald Alexander, Robert Bratton, James Lockridge, Michael Finney, John Anderson and others. Fear-God Brown was presented for damning the Court and saying that the French could not press in from the Ohio too soon for him. . A petition for a road from Cleghorn to Purgatory was granted and the said way was ordered to be cleared.

This docket and the tavern yard, where was spread a large part of Jordan's trading venture and where, upon the earth in the sun sat the Negroes yet unsold, halved the throng's attention. Much was bought from Jordan and his two fellows. Their wagons and pack horses would go lighter on up the Valley, on south. The inhabitants of Augusta bought powder and lead, guns and knives; bought tools, axes, scythes, hatchets, and what not; bought ploughshares, bought nails — tenpenny, eightpenny and fourpenny nails; bought pots and pans and pewter dishes, plates and porringers; bought paper, books and tea, looking-glasses, combs, shoes and shoe and knee buckles; bought osnaburgh, dowlas, ticking, broadcloth and cambric; bought wigs and buttons, quilted petticoats, hoods and jackets; bought salt in quantity, pepper, allspice and cinnamon, window lights, needles and pins and gold and silver brooches and a deal beside. Before sunset all the Negroes were sold. These went to the recognized or incipient "great folk" of these parts. So many things together, Staunton had an animated day!

Stephen Trabue sold a brooch, a cluster of garnets quaintly set in gold, to a tall man of something over thirty with a handsome bronzed face. The brooch had tickled his own fancy, and as he liked this young man, he was pleased that he should have it for some woman. It was now more than midafternoon and the crowd was rapidly thinning, such a great proportion of it having distances

to ride or to walk. This purchaser not only had the brooch, he had one of the Negroes, a strong, black, good-natured fellow. "Nothing else?" asked Trabue.

"You are going on to Borden's Grant and Burke's Tract?"

"Aye. Farther. Clean to the Cherokees."

"Don't sell out before you get to Burke's Tract. It's easier for you to be the carrier up the Valley than for me. I've spoken to Jordan there and he'll put by some things. You'll be setting up a market near Mt. Olivet church."

"Do you know," asked Trabue, "the Selkirks in Burke's Tract?"

"I do," answered the other. "I'm Rob Neill, the surveyor, that married Euphemia Selkirk. This brooch is for her and this puppet for our child Jean."

"I'm glad to meet you!" said Trabue. "Phemie's husband! And has Elizabeth got a husband too? You must excuse me for speaking of her as 'Phemie', but I wagoned them over the Blue Ridge in '36. My name's Trabue—Stephen Trabue. I've often thought of every one of them since. They were as fine a family as I ever met; they had strength and courage and willingness, and were laughers, and there was a kind of air about them—like that brooch. How are they all? That was a good man, that minister! And Andrew? He was the kind that'll get on."

"Aye! He has a hundred head of cattle and thirty horses, beside sheep and hogs, and he's talking of building a stone house. He and Nancy have four children. I've heard Phemie and all of them talk of you, Mr. Trabue, and I'm glad to meet you! Yes, Mr. Selkirk is a saint—though he has difficulties. They'll want to see you and keep you for a day and night, if you can't stay longer. They're fond of you, and Robin has a dog named Anthony.

Tam is at the law in Williamsburgh. Elizabeth's a fine woman. She married Conan Burke."

"Conan Burke! I heard he was married, but didn't hear the name. So it's Elizabeth! Well!"

"They have three children. Conan's a kind of a dreamer but practical too in his own way. We all live in one neighborhood,—Andrew, Phemie and I, the minister, the Burkes. The old Colonel comes and goes. Robin has not married. He's what you might call a white Indian or an old Robin Hood's man."

"I'm as pleased," said Trabue, "as a bee with clover! I'll see them all. I've never forgotten a one of them. Are you starting home now?"

"Yes. I had to come to court on road matters. I'll sleep to-night at Will McDowell's."

"You've got a fine Negro there."

"He's Andrew's. I bought for him. Andrew has three now. I've a woman to help Phemie. But the minister would be shot before he'd buy a slave. And Elizabeth will not let Conan buy. In some ways she's more like her father than any of them.—That fellow'll foot it beside me to McDowell's and there Will will lend me a horse for him.—I'm glad to have met you, Mr. Trabue!"

Jordan, Webster and Trabue went on the next day with lightened wagons and packs up the Valley, selling here and selling there as they went. The first day it rained all day, a chill, autumnal rain and mist, veiling even the near hills. The second day the clouds lowered, but the third all things swung back into the soft brilliance of this land in October. It was so when they saw First Man Mountain, and found, a mile from Mt. Olivet church, a small, small tavern. It was so the next day when they knocked up a booth where wares might be displayed, and the inhabitants of Burke's Tract began to be drawn to

this sudden market. They came on horse and came afoot; chiefly men, but women too. This part of Augusta was nothing like so populous as the Staunton region—Donegal still being a vision in the air—but its populousness had increased and was increasing. It is a relative word. To eyes from the other side the Blue Ridge, to eyes from Europe, it might seem a giant wilderness with the thinnest sprinkling of people, unless one called animals people. The better and better houses were still log houses, small at the largest; and the increasing number of roads but ancient Indian trails widened,—poor, narrow and infrequent enough; and the cultivated fields yet wild and untidy. But all that was childhood, not eld. The country had the earnestness of childhood and its intensity upon building. Change might be seen from day to day, and at times the child's spirit sang over the mounting and forming things. Rude well-being and much of hope marked the Valley. It had beauty and a good clime; a mighty, high Valley with a fertile soil. It had a strong stock, a people inured to hardship and obstinate to live, with a religious trust in itself.

Jordan and Webster sold; Stephen Trabue intrusted his share to them and went visiting. He visited John Selkirk the minister, Mrs. Selkirk, Miss Mackay and Robin, and was happy as a prince in the minister's quiet house with its field or two around, its cow and horse and chickens and Watch the dog. He visited Andrew and Nancy at Wide Fields, that was planning itself already—every smallness and rudeness allowed for, and barring the tobacco—on the lines of the great plantations east of the mountains. Andrew and Nancy were as glad to see him as the rest had been, and the children—Gregory, John, Deborah and Anne—stood with rounded eyes. Andrew showed him his buildings and his fields and meadows, his mill, his horses

and cattle. Yes, it was a big place and took labor; he had nine indentured white men and three Negroes, and would eventually have more. Horses and cattle for this country and a steady market alike in the Valley and over the mountains.—The future of the Valley? It was impossible to tell it, except that it would be great.—He was thinking of building a schoolhouse near Mt. Olivet and bringing from Williamsburgh a young man for teacher. There were his children, Phemie's, Elizabeth and Conan's, the Murchiesons' and others.

"It dizzies me," said Trabue, "the way things are growing!"

Andrew gave a short, triumphant laugh. "Aye, man! The seedling's getting to be a tree."

Trabue pondered matters. "And if the Indians have not troubled you all these years, it does not seem likely that they'd begin now. It's twenty years and more since the first cabin was built in the Shenando, and the first pack horse came over the mountains. It's not likely."

"No! There's the Lancaster Treaty. They know now it's our land. Small roving parties come through, as they've always done, and a nuisance they are—demanding food and thieving if it's not forthcoming and bragging of past glories! Sooner or later we'll have to curb that too. But we've done with warpaths and war whoops."

Trabue seemed to continue to ponder. "I've been at the northern end of the Shenando, at the knot of cabins they're calling Winchester, and I've listened to a man named Vanmeter from the Wappotomaka that's one of the heads of Potomac. Folk in that direction spend more time on the ways of the French than you do down here. They say that if the Indians should go tee-totally with the French, and if King George and King Louis went to war, there would be a firebrand thrown that would fire a lot of woods."

"It might happen," said Andrew. "Plague and war can always befall! But it's not likely. The French say so and so, and the English say so and so, but I hold that we'll take it out in saying, and come to some accommodation. It'll be sound sense for us to do so. Anyhow, if it will hold off for another twenty years, the Valley will be too big to care. Tramp out the fire right away!"

"Well, it's likely, as you say, never to come!" agreed Trabue. "They'll just die away into the west—into the setting sun, as they say. And as for King George and King Louis, they may patch it up. As the minister says, we may all grow wiser and better."

He went to see Phemie and Rob and little Jean, and it was happy up under First Man, in the surveyor's small house. Here too he heard the future of the country! "A big, free land! Why shouldn't we be as great and greater than Europe?"

"Europe's here."

"Aye, strong men and women out of her. Home there—home here. But this is the new home!"

There was an old man sitting with them upon the rude porch. "David Hamilton here remembers—tell us what you remember, David!"

"I remember the siege of Derry. My two brothers and a sister were behind the walls, in Londonderry, starving, starving, and never giving up. My father and mother and my little sister and I were driven by King James, his papist troops—driven with all our countryside—before Derry, under the walls, to starve and wail there and make them inside the town so piteous and shaken they would give up. I remember as 'twas yesterday, I do! I was ten years old. My father carried my sister in his arms and I clung to my mother's skirts, and we starved and were beaten and pushed with pikes, there before Derry, the host

of us, for all our friends and kin in Derry to see. And yet they didn't give in—they never gave in. My mother died and my little sister. Sixty-two years ago, it's sixty-two years. But Derry never gave in. King William came and King James fled over the sea to King Louis." His voice faded away like a dropping leaf.

"Kings, kings!" said Rob and laughed. "Three kings in a sentence!"

Phemie brought out ale and some cakes she had baked. Little Jean followed her and pushed close to her father. "Tell me a story about the Highlands! Tell me about Neill the Piper!"

CHAPTER XVI

LAST of all Trabue went to see Elizabeth and Conan Burke.

How beautiful was the flaming knoll upon which they had their house of squared and browning logs, with the great outside stone chimney, with the little porch over which ran a vine! Here the river had the form of a sickle, and they abode in the steely and flashing curvature. It came from the west, it made this bend, then with a leap and a song ran east to the far-away ocean. Its basin land was rich land, pasturage and corn land. The maize was standing and yet green; the old Indian fields where moved horses and kine rolled a green carpet. But the maples, the hickories, the sycamores and tulip trees, the lindens and oaks and gums were turning yellow and red and copper. The grape that rioted in all lesser and sunny forest showed clusters of blue amid large yellow leaves. The dogwood had crimson berries. Great flights of birds were going overhead — going south.

The house was simpler than Andrew's, as simple as the minister's. Each year Colonel Matthew urged the building of another, and each year Conan put it by with, "Wait a while! Elizabeth and I like it so." Nor did he have the stock that had Andrew, nor engage to any such extent in buying and selling. And though he was the son of the richest man in the upper Valley, all the service that he had consisted of four men and a woman at wages and a young girl bound out by the vestry and taken at the wish of Elizabeth. The men had a cabin among the trees, the two women a small room built out from the back of the house;

the rest was for Conan and Elizabeth and the three children, Matthew, John, and Eileen.

"Stephen, Stephen, you were so good to us!—You've the same wrinkles about your eyes when you laugh!"

Trabue regarded her with admiration. "All of you were always saying 'Bonny!' and 'Eh, then!' and 'Who'd have thocht it?'—You're a bonny tall woman, Elizabeth!"

"Aye, she's bonny!" said Conan and meant it with all his heart.

She was sitting on the porch with the vine above it. Beside her upon the step, his shoulders against the rustic pillar, sat Conan whom she had loved in the snowstorm by the river James, and in the minister's house and Mt. Olivet church, and riding afar to be wedded, and in the deep wood and the Indian shelter, and all times in between and all the while since. And he had loved her. Not that they could not differ and at times strain the one against the other. A degree of pride, wilfulness and self-regard had a clutch in each nature. But it was not a strangle hold, and it was likely that the end of their lives would see it weakened and dissolving. In and through all they loved each other, and their children and kindred and the land, and over and through them, at times, they felt the sense of another world and a mightier life. The man was a kind of poet; she had in her no little of her father, but something too that was strongly of the earth, and something that was from faëry land. They worked like every one else, she and Conan; they went to church, to merrymakings and to funerals; Burke was an important name. When common enterprises were afoot they were consulted: where there was trouble they became known for ready hand and gentle heart. But for all that Burke's Tract said of them that they were retired folk. The son was not sociable like the father. Andrew said that Conan was without ambition and urged Elizabeth

to urge him to build and to put more land in corn, and more stock in the meadows. But she shook her head. "It does not suit him. It's best to have a life that suits."

Now she sat on the porch beneath the vine, and Conan took his accustomed seat upon the great stone they had put for a step, and the two boys, Matthew and John, rolled upon the ground beneath a sugar tree that cast down scarlet leaves, and within the house the girl Barb was singing to the little Eileen. And here with them sat the old friend whom she had always kept in vision, driving his wagon, coming up with them like a strong guardian from a land without mountains to a land with mountains. So they talked, and the violet shadows drew down, and the bells on the home cows, Shamrock and Rose and Thistle, began to sound, and the smell of supper to mingle with the smell of autumn mold and leaves. Conan took up Matthew and John, one on each shoulder, and they went indoors to the fire in the great fireplace in the big room, where were a spinning wheel and guns in racks and many hanging things and a cradle, and a settle by the blaze, and the table spread with pewter and a little delf. The elder woman, Annie, put upon the table broiled partridges, corn mush and a little wheat bread and a dish of eggs. Elizabeth brought a pitcher of milk and another of beer. She and Trabue and Annie and Barb stood while Conan said, "Lord God, bless the food to our friend and to us!" Then they sat down and ate while the two boys who had had their wooden bowls of mush and milk played, and at last curled up and slept, upon the sheepskin by the fire, until Barb came and put them to bed.

Conan and Elizabeth and Trabue sat by the glowing hickory, and presently came Annie and Barb for a corner of the hearth. Dragon the dog lay there too. The night hung stiller than still, cold and clear, with a promise of

white frost in the morning. "How are the wolves hereabouts?" asked Trabue.

"A plenty of them. We kill and kill, and still they breed."

"Panthers too?"

"Aye, quite enough of them! The bears are a pest, coming down for the corn. Robin Selkirk and David Murchieson killed a buffalo in August by Beaver Run. But they grow rarer all the time."

"A fox was barking when I went to the door."

"No one tries to count *them*! Nor the hawks and the eagles."

A log parting, Conan took the ash stick and pushed it back. Said Trabue, "Anywhere in Virginia, I reckon, one can find Loneliness without going far to look for her! Save for the trees and the critturs. Loneliness of human kind, I mean. But you've got more of it hereabouts in the great mountains. Few of you and far, and I think the shapes around would scare me!"

"You are not used to mountains. They are friendly. As for few and far, that's comparative. Go a little west from here and you will find few and far."

"The country is opening up, under the Alleghanies?"

"Aye." He gestured with the stick. "My father now has land yonder, thirty-odd miles from here. He's a land lover—the Colonel! He has too much."

"Are they the same kind of settlers?"

"About the same. They are living more rudely than we do here. About, I dare say, as we did when we first came into the Valley. They have narrow, rich and lovely vales between long walls of mountain. It's Burke's Land, as this is Burke's Tract."

"You've seen the country?"

"I went there with my father last year.—He needs some one to be there steadily.—I will tell you, Mr. Trabue—

we are thinking, Elizabeth and I, of removing thither."

"That seems strange," said Trabue, "fixed as you are here, and friends all around you. Isn't the Colonel set upon seeing a town grow up here, and you might be the Lord Mayor? And there are Elizabeth's folk.—Of course, I've noted how the very word 'west' begins to draw in this country!"

"It is not that which draws us," said Conan. "Elizabeth and I love this place and would have no quarrel with living and dying here. It would serve my father to have some one of his own in Burke's Land, but he has been set upon Donegal here, and we the lords of it. However he would not at last refuse his consent. He would grow sanguine that we might come back, or that Providence meant Donegal to rise in Burke's Land."

"Why then are you going?"

"It is not settled that we are going. We may, that is all. If we do it will be because of the war in Mt. Olivet church and the pack at cry upon the minister."

Trabue laid down his pipe. "Mr. Neill said something about that, but it was not easy to believe! I should think anybody but a foolish folk would know that it was great luck and merit to have him for a shepherd!"

Elizabeth spoke. "It's not nearly all of Mt. Olivet—it's just first and foremost John and Esther Gellatly, and next Duncan Gow that they've terrified into becoming a hunter of the unorthodox, and then the fears and clamors of maybe a score. It's all about babes being damned if they die unbaptized—and hell fire burning for aye like this fire, only hotter—and old Alison Dick that they cry is a witch, and my father would not let them try her in the river. They screech that it is not goodness in him, but the devil. But I would not be John and Esther Gellatly, nor Duncan Gow. No, I would not!"

Her voice vibrated. "The rest of Mt. Olivet says to my father, 'Stay here, stay with us, for you are God's man!' But he says, 'No, no! There is Mr. Saunderson who is young and orthodox. He will do good to those, and no harm to these. But as for me, my Lord forbids that I rest here a cause of dissension and against the will of now almost half the congregation!' So he says he will go, as he went from Thistlebrae. If he goes it will have to be westward where he may still have freedom to think and to speak. If he goes and my mother and Aunt Kirstie and Robin, Conan and I and our children will go too!"

Her breast rose and fell. "The west's none so far," said Conan. "Step twenty miles beyond First Man Mountain and you're in the west. Burke's Land is but a summer day's travel. There's an old trail that we're going to widen into a road. Already there are a decent lot of folk and there will be more. We could build our log church, and John Selkirk would be our minister. We'll put all he does and is against Duncan Gow's black wishes for the world."

"Will Andrew and Phemie go?—Your pardon, Mrs. Burke, but I called you all so once."

"Call us so still, Stephen. No, they won't go. Andrew and Nancy are rooted here as we are not. And Rob Neill has his own work, and Tam when he comes from Williamsburgh will settle here. But my heart would break to see my father and mother and Aunt Kirstie go away alone or with Robin only. And Conan is so good to me!"

"Going a little farther when we are so far does not fright me," said Conan. "My only care is to persuade my father, and I think I can. Restless as he is, he is as like to come to love and dwell in Burke's Land as in Burke's Tract. But we do not talk of all this openly as we are talking now."

"No," said Elizabeth. "But it will come to it. I see

that. Moreover, sitting spinning last week, the thread broke, and I looked up, and I saw—I do not know if it were within or without, but I saw—a log building, and it was a strange-looking one, and we were going in procession and, it seemed to me, in haste to it, father and mother and Conan and the children and Aunt Kirstie and I, and the mountains around were not these, and the river was not this. I do not know what it all was, but I knew then that we would go away from here, though we should love it always, for it has been home.”

With that she rose from the settle. “It is late. You must be tired, Stephen, with going about and seeing us all.” As she spoke she lighted a candle. “Barb, give the master the Book.”

But before Conan began to read there dawned a sound from without; distant, then nearer. “A horse is coming up the hill.”

He and Trabue went to the door. The horse was traveling slowly, stumbling over the loose stones. It was dark and yet not dark, with a cold, green light about the western horizon, and the multitude of stars making contribution. The air struck cold, the wind was northerly. Now the horse emerged from the sighing trees upon the grassy strip before the house.

“Who is there?” called Conan.

“It’s I, Conan.”

“Father! Where did you come from?”

Colonel Matthew Burke drew rein and heavily dismounted. “Aye, it’s late. I had better, I suppose, have slept at McNab’s and come on to-morrow. But I’m a sick man, Conan, and I wanted to get to you and Elizabeth. Aye, my boy, a sick man—”

“What is the matter with you, Father? Take the horse, Mr. Trabue.”

The Colonel coughed, then groaned. "I got wet through in that rain yesterday, and like a fool I didn't stop at the first cabin, but rode on for hours. I shivered all last night at Glasgow's and to-day I set up this cough, and now there's a knife in my side. Come in, Conan, and get me some brandy—"

They brought him in, and sent Barb to waken one of the men who would look to the horse. They guided him to the settle by the fire. He leaned against Elizabeth.

"Elizabeth, my dear, I've a notion I'm done for. Aye, and I saw after sunset, as the moon was going down, my wife, Eileen O'More—"

"Drink this, Father! Annie, get the bed ready. Barb, move the children into the little room.—Dear Father, now you will rest and sleep, and be better with the day. To see her after sunset meant only that you're aye loving each other, and so catch glimpses—"

They put him to bed, but he was restless all night and with the dawn they sent twelve miles for Doctor Thomas Wilson who had studied medicine at Edinburgh. In the afternoon he stood by the bed. "Aye, 'tis a pleurisy. I'll just let a little blood, and then we'll clap on a blister."

But the Colonel got no better. They sat up with him that night. At the dead turn he said to his son, "You will not have as much, Conan, as once I thought you would. I have sold almost all I had in Burke's Tract, and the money has gone in things unprofitable. So many suits at law, and that trading ship that sank off Hatteras! There may be more in Burke's Land than here, after all. Do what you please about it and everything. You and Elizabeth have your own life to lead. Mine's done."

"No, no, Father!"

"Yes, 'tis. Well, I've enjoyed it, and I won't whimper. But don't forget, Conan, about Donegal. I'm not really

caring if it's here or in Burke's Land, but I want it somewhere. Only here it's likely to be larger and more important. But you never can tell which way population's going. But somewhere, Conan, somewhere! It's been my dream. It's more than that. I've made it half alive, I've brooded it so in my mind and mothered it. You've got time enough, but don't let it die."

"I won't, Father, or my sons won't. But you will get well —"

"No, I won't. I know death when I meet him. Where's Elizabeth?"

"Here, Father."

"You've been the darlint to me, Elizabeth! And now you've a child named Eileen.—And there's Eileen herself standing in the gray dawn. Eileen!"

He struggled up, then sank back upon the bed. They gave him wine and made the fire upon the great hearth blaze, but as the dawn brightened his heart gave way and he died. "My dear children"—he began, then turned his head and was gone.

CHAPTER XVII

THE Colonel's body was laid in Mt. Olivet churchyard, and all of Burke's Tract and many from the middle Valley were there that day.

When they went home, when the friends were gone, when the log house lay quiet, for Barb had taken the children to the branch to play, husband and wife sat together in the doorway, before them the autumn world. His arm was around her, he rested his head upon her bosom, she comforted him. "He's not gone far. While he loves us he will wish and will and accomplish the being with us. While we love him the doors will stand open for him, or we may rise where he is—"

"I believe it, and yet I must grieve. I grieve, Father — Father!"

"Aye, we must grieve.— Do you mind that day that we were walking yonder, and he began to tell about you when you were a laddie and you and he used to wander together? He said that you were such good company that he never wished any better. And that it had lasted, and that though sometimes you differed, or in some way hurt each other a little, never did you wrench his heart as some sons did for fathers. That always there was shine close behind any cloud between you."

"Aye, that is true! We always made up quickly. And then there was such peace and fondness!"

"That is what will come now after a while, when the bruising is over. Such peace and fondness, all things made up between you!"

"Aye, aye, I know it," said Conan. He straightened him-

self and rose, lifting her with him. They stood, and the low October sun lit the landscape with a red shining upon the colored, forested mountains and the winding river. "There's a deal to do, Elizabeth! I have not that active liking for doing that he had. But I must do. I know it." The children's voices came up from the stream. "Will they remember me as I remember him? I doubt."

"You need not. They will!"

They went indoors, and when the candles were lighted he took out papers of the Colonel's and began to pore over them and to cipher.

A week later Robin Selkirk went hunting in this region, in the untouched forest west of Lonely Creek. He had his white horse Moonlight, to bring back the spoil, and his dog Wolf, named so because he was so like one, and his gun for which he had a name but never told it, and his knife and various pouches. He wore the hunting shirt; his eyes were sea blue and his hair tawny, he was tall and lean and wiry. He was a dutiful son, but he cared not for women, and went his own way. He cared for "creatures" although he hunted them, and a forest was to him a living army, and a mountain stream a desirable witch. Sometimes he came out upon mountain tops, and stood there on a crag of granite or of limestone, against a deep blue sky, watching and wondering a little about the world. He wondered about simple things—where the forest went to in the west, where the buffalo were gone, how it would seem to be an Indian and you and your folk to have lived here forever, what good there was in a rattlesnake, and if the mountains lifted higher and higher until they were miles in the sky would an eagle still be there to build, and such things. Sometimes he thought about Scotland, but rarely; any other land than this seemed to have passed away from him. Now and again, at rather long intervals, he met an Indian or Indians—

three or four together maybe—in the woods. They would be walking upon some trail, one on the heels of the other, upon some obscure business of their own—"passing through"—always passing through, having no abiding place in these parts. They were friendly enough, and Robin returned their friendliness. Between them was hunters' sympathy, the touch of forest men. Sometimes they shared their fire and sylvan meal, and afterwards each color might tell stories. But to-day he came upon no red men. He and the creatures had the forest all to themselves. He shot a doe and three turkeys and loaded them upon Moonlight. They were for food. Then he shot for their skins a fox, a marten and an otter. He saw a bear and fired, but seemed to miss. It went off in lumbering haste through the red oaks and yellow hickories. He and Wolf and Moonlight had a quietly happy day. In the afternoon glory, when all the leaves were flames, they turned homeward, and going a little way around, came by the house of Conan and Elizabeth.

From a ferny, mossy rock gushed the finest spring, and here beneath a giant pine they had a small building—a spring house—for the keeping of butter and milk and meat. The water flowed over a part of its stone floor; it was shade and coolness itself. It stood just within the rude fence of rails that went around the log dwelling and its immediate out cabins and a circle of grassy yard. Robin, on the field and forest side, found his sister at the spring house, in her hand a pail of milk. She put it down and coming to the fence leaned upon it and talked with him.

"Moonlight has his load! How d'y'e do, Wolf? How are they at home, Robin?"

"Well enough. They're saying farewell."

She threw out her hands. "Father has decided to go?"

"Aye. He says if you are going to do a thing, do it."

"I knew it would come to it. Then we go too, Conan and the bairns and I!"

"He won't let you unless it's Conan's mighty free will."

"It is."

"Aye, Conan told him so. He came by yesterday. He says that the Colonel was quite reconciled at the last — said that Burke's Land might serve the future just as well as Burke's Tract. Conan said he had a feeling that the future took us anyhow, wherever we went or whatever we did, and father said he thought something like that was the truth. After Conan was gone he said he'd ride White-foot here to-morrow and talk it out with you both. So I thought I'd come by and tell you."

"Robin, you'd like to go?"

"Why, it's deeper in the west, Bess. I aye thought I'd kind of like to go west, and west, and west! See what's there."

"I thought the funeral sobered the tribe that's persecuting. But Sunday there was just as much groaning!"

"Aye. They're set on being in eternal danger.— How are the children?"

"Well. Come in, Robin, won't you? They worship you."

"No, not now. Moonlight and Wolf and I must get on home. I promised Aunt Kirstie I'd mend the stile for her. I told her if we were going to Burke's Land we might as well leave it for the other man, but she just looked at me. Well, farewell!"

The two hunters and Moonlight departed. With her arms upon the rail Elizabeth stood looking after them till the wide path that was called a road doubled a hill and all were hidden. As she leaned there it suddenly occurred to her to pray. She shut her eyes and bent her head upon her arm. "O God, if there is mistake in our going, if it isn't

what You mean for us, show us somehow! If I'm responsible for Conan's going, Conan and the children, aye, and the men and Annie and Barb if they go with us, and if it is a mistake let any ill that comes fall on me, not them! O God, bless and keep us all, those that go and those that stay! O God, if I might have a sign—"

She waited, hoping somehow for it, but there was nothing but the bright, late afternoon, and the gurgle of the stream, and the strong fragrance of the pine and the chatter of a squirrel. So at last she lifted her head and took up the pail of milk and turned toward the house.

On the door stone she found seated, awaiting her, Mother Dick from the broken cabin under Cedar Hill. "My cow has wandered, and I have not a drop of milk for my porridge."

"I can spare you a quart, Mother Dick. Did you bring your bucket?"

"It's borrowing, Mrs. Burke. You understand that? I'll repay as soon as the creature comes back."

"That's as you please. Here, I'll pour it in." She filled the small wooden bucket which the other produced. Mother Dick set the top upon it. "I give you my thanks, Mrs. Burke." She stood up. "You're the only one now that does not refuse me a drop of milk, or a handful of meal, or a bit of twine, or the loan of an axe."

"My father and mother wouldn't. Nor Nancy Selkirk, nor Phemie Neill."

"They're on the other side of Mt. Olivet—too far for me. No, and I have no broomstick that can take me! No, and I do not change into a cat and run thither! No, nor when a body lends me some bit thing does it put them and theirs, their weans and goods, in my hands for harm! Now would not any reasoning being think it would bring them good if it brought anything? Good from heaven above us,

anyway. But there, they say I speak from the Book because the devil shows me how!"

"You would not hurt my bairns, Mother Dick. I know that. Whether you borrowed from me or did not borrow."

"No, I'd not hurt them nor any bairn. Look at me, Elizabeth Burke! Do I look as though I would?"

As she spoke she stood straight, a woman of above sixty, but strong yet, tall and large-boned, with a fair, broad face. If now and then her glance seemed absent or distraught, or if, when one came near her cabin, she was heard talking to herself, that might simply be due to a lonely life after the death of her husband and son, perished in the snow one winter when there were few folks indeed to show the way in the Shenando country. Now as she stood there before Elizabeth two tears started from Mother Dick's eyes and ran down her cheeks where the color still lingered. "God knows it breaks my heart," she said, "that they should think it of me!"

The younger woman laid her strong hands upon the other's shoulders. "This house doesn't, Mother Dick."

"No, and I'd die for it," said Mother Dick. "There are others that don't, either—the Murchiesons and others. But they aren't neighbors to me. Those that do think it may put fire to my cabin or drown me one night, or have me into gaol at Staunton, and the others will find the wind too strong to stand against and just let me go. I know—I know! I had a neighbor in Scotland—it was that way with her. They burned her, and God He knoweth she had no harm, or not that kind of harm, in her!—You are going with the minister to Burke's Land?"

"Who told you that?"

"Maybe 'twas some one that stopped by the cabin—maybe 'tis just in the air. Are Annie and Barb and your four men going with you?"

"Yes, if we go."

"Then I've got a bigger thing than the milk to ask for. Let me go along!"

"You, Mother Dick!"

"I'm strong. I've got ten good years in me yet. I'll work for you as one works when she works for love. I can do more than Annie any day. I can mind the children well, and children take to me. And I know the good herbs and what to do with them."

Elizabeth, standing in the sunset light, looked at her with a slightly paling face. She seemed to hear, like the shrilling locusts, the following of John and Esther Gelatly and Duncan Gow upon this especial action of the outgoing families. More to the point, she heard Andrew and Nancy and Phemie and Rob. Unwise — unwise — unwise!

Yet when, in early November, the Indian Summer yet holding, John Selkirk and his household and Conan Burke and his departed for Burke's Land from Burke's Tract, Mother Dick sat in the wagon with Elizabeth and Annie and Barb and the children.

CHAPTER XVIII

BURKE'S Land increased its settlers. But it lay west of the Great Valley, well among the high mountains, and it could never compete in numbers with Burke's Tract, not in numbers nor spread of estate, nor increasingly goodly building, nor advantage nor opportunity nor importance. It stretched a high, narrow vale with some grass but more timber. Through it with as many windings as a grape tendril flowed a narrow river, clear and rapid. To the east mountains, to the west high mountains, clean against the horizon like a wall, save where at long intervals showed a notch like a nick from a giant knife. Those were passes, "gaps", and behind them still the west. A "road" tied Burke's Land to Burke's Tract; a summer day's travel put one back in the parent settlement. Once there one had but to take the main Valley Road, as the Pennsylvania Road was now being called, and so at last reach Staunton that was one's county seat, the place of law and merchandise and other utilities and amenities. Burke's Land was frontier, backwoods, at least in the estimation of Burke's Tract. But behind it, the Last Leap region, that went again to the west, was what Burke's Land called the backwoods. It, now, was really back!

The houses in Burke's Land favored the first houses built in New Virginia. All were log; some a mere one or two-room cabin, others this and a loft and lean-to; a very few two-story with sheds and outhouses. And all stood far apart, each in its own land, with hills and forest and rough and narrow paths between. The streams that

tumbled into the little river had stepping stones or maybe a log without rail thrown across; the river must be forded. Save where it lifted steeply into mountains the land was rich land. The corn sprang after the plough. More and more Burke's Land used the plough, but still was it chiefly hunters' country. But the Last Leap region was hunters' paradise, and much did Robin Selkirk frequent it.

He and Wolf were over that way on a spring day. Wolf, older by three years than when he first had come loping into Burke's Land beside his master, still was quick to seize and stubborn to hold. He and Robin padded through the forest, and where Godforsaken Run plunged twenty feet into a black pool exchanged the sense of loneliness for that of coming company. Certainly there was a horse approaching. The man's ears were almost as quick as the dog's; both stood at gaze. Screen after screen of hemlock was between them and the vision that should correspond to the sound, but the latter told much. It told that the horse was tired, that the rider was not lightly made or carried luggage and was used to horses, that they came from the north. A faint, old Indian track ran that way, clear from Last Leap region, up knife-blade valleys and over hills and mountains to the Lord knew where. Robin had often thought that he would take it himself on a day and see what happened. Now here was some one who had done it before him, coming south though, instead of going north. Some one perhaps from as far as the south branch of the Potomac, or from Winchester. Robin's imagination worked cleanly, decisively, and quite often turned out to have been perception of the fact.

The last hemlock stood back. The traveler rode into a patch of sunlight, saw the man and the dog by the rock, had one instant of check, then came on with a gesture of friendliness.

"Be still, Wolf!" ordered Robin. "Don't you know good folk when you see them?"

The horseman was now with the hunter beside the cascade, the pool, another belt of hemlocks and the mossy rock. "Good morning, friend! You're the first human being I've met for many a mile!"

"Aye, this is Last Leap region. Good morning to you! From where?"

"From Elbow River since dawn. Back of that, from Winchester way. What an Alleghany wilderness it is! About every twenty miles a cabin and a settler — mostly from Ulster in Ireland!"

"Aye, it's real frontier," said Robin, "and what you might call Irish Scotland. But now you're drawing toward Burke's Land, and that's more settled."

"Burke's Land! Well, I am glad to get to it at last," said the other. "I knew it was down this way. I met Colonel Burke once and heard him talk of all that this country would grow to be. That was some years ago when I was quite young."

He was a very young man still, the rider, hardly more than twenty-two, but seeming older than his years because of a certain dignity and authoritativeness about him. Tall, ruddy, high-featured, dressed for the wilderness, but after no makeshift fashion and in good material, his horse a good horse, his gun a good gun, besides pistols and a knife, there was something about him that said, "Eastern Virginia — and English Virginia." Moreover it said, "A responsible, energetic young gentleman, and able to lead."

Robin pondered the evident fatigue of the horse. The man too, for all he was strong, looked weary. There would have been rough going from Elbow River. "Well, sir," he said, "if you can keep on for a few miles you'll find yourself in Burke's Land, with a choice of houses to rest

in. I'm thinking I might as well turn myself and show you the way."

"I've got a feel for direction," said the other. "I'm a surveyor and well enough used to getting about in unfamiliar country. But of course it will be pleasanter to have company."

They did not talk much as they went. Robin was a silent fellow, and the surveyor dog-tired. The latter felt it incumbent upon him somewhat to explain his appearance here. "I have been lately on a kind of expedition north and west of Winchester. It gave me a desire to see further into things in this back country. So as I had just now a little time to myself I decided—. Knowledge may be handy if ever there's trouble."

"It's wild country," said Robin, "but there are tracks straight to the Ohio."

Some time later they came to three tall pine trees and a boundary stone. "Burke's Land. Wait till we get to the top of the hill!"

The top of the hill, bare and swept by a sweet breeze, gave a lovely prospect. The two men, the horse and the dog stood well above a mountain valley—timber, grass, a certain number of ploughed fields, the Arrow River, that ran into Last Leap River, log houses in clearings, azure sky and thin, fragrant, warm and bracing air. Below them stood a log church. "Mount Promise Church," quoth Robin. "My father is the minister."

"Presbyterian?"

"Oh, aye!"

"You haven't any blockhouse or fort?"

"No. It isn't needed."

The surveyor said with energy, "I hope it won't be!" and continued to gaze. "That's a considerable house yonder. It might at need be turned into one."

"That's my brother-in-law's, Conan Burke's."

"Colonel Burke's son?"

"Aye. The McLeods are nearer, but I think you'd better ride on to Conan's."

Descending the hill they found the road that ran through Burke's Land. They passed Promise Church and came to a one-room cabin, humming like a hive. "Promise School," said Robin. "My Aunt Kirstie is teacher."

As he spoke it was recess and thirty children poured forth to the trees, to grapevine swings, to the bright stream where they had a dam and water wheels. Clad in homespun, bare-legged, bare-headed, they were a merry, shouting, active crew. At sight of Robin and Wolf two boys broke from their mates. "Uncle Robin, Uncle Robin!" "Hey, Matthew! Hey, John!"

Kirstie Mackay stood in the cabin door. The two from Last Leap came upon the sunny turf beside it. The young horseman swept off his hat, "Good day, madam! You've a fine lot of youngsters to instruct!"

Kirstie regarded him with favor in her quiet, deep brown eyes. Her eyes had poetry in them and saw poetry in most things and folk they rested upon. She thought him well to look at, and a manly, resolved, open, lairdly young man. "If one likes to teach, sir," she said, "all are fine scholars. Is it not lovely, the day?"

Robin carried him on down Promise Hill. "That is the manse yonder. You'd like my father. He's a man.—But you'd better come on now to Conan and Elizabeth's."

As they passed the manse John Selkirk was ploughing in the field and Jean sat spinning in the doorway. The fine mountain air, so sunny, so charged with life and perfume, filled the deep vale that was Burke's Land. It seemed a kind of paradise to the weary young surveyor.

Conan Burke's log house stood wider and deeper than

others in Burke's Land. He had out cabins too, and around all a good fence within which had been left forest trees, and there were grass and vines and blossom. Behind the house lay a garden patch and sloped a ploughed field where later would wave the green corn, and at a distance showed other cleared tracts and ploughed land. To the eyes of the surveyor, used to the great eastern plantings, the wide tobacco leaves, the many Negroes, the spacious mansions, frame or brick, the settling in Burke's Land must seem small and primitive enough. But it was first grist for the mill of the future, and to-day the fragrant, singing spring gave it glamor. The young man had an anxiety too at his heart that affected such regions as this, bringing in poignancy. "What if?" he thought. "What if?"

About Conan's rose a pleasant clatter of fowls and humming of bees with the sound of a cowbell from the hill, and a great singing of birds. Mother Dick also was singing, in a cracked voice that still was sweet.

"Be it wind, be it weet, be it hail, be it sleet,
Our ship maun sail the faem;
The king's daughter of Noroway,
'Tis we maun fetch her hame."

There was a loom house in the yard, and Mother Dick was weaving. The five-year-old Eileen sat on the earth beside the door, under a wild cherry tree, making mud pies. The surveyor and Robin came through the gate and by the loom house. "Where are all the bodies, Mother Dick?" cried Robin.

Mother Dick left the frame and came to the door. "Conan is with the men in the field, and Elizabeth and Barb took their dinner to them. They'll be back in a little. Light down and rest yourself, sir, for you look to need it!"

As she spoke she stood, a tall, strong figure, little bent

or weakened by her sixty-five years, in a clean linsey gown with an apron and mutch. Her face had a ruddiness, her blue eyes were little faded by a life of trouble and work. Now they continued to rest upon the young man who had somewhat heavily and wearily dismounted. They were not faded, but at long intervals of time a curious wideness and fixity came over them, as though something afar off and seizing was passing before their windows. Such a look took her now — Robin had seen it once before. "The second sight's on her! What do you see, Mother Dick?"

Mother Dick seemed to be at once regarding and not regarding the person of the surveyor. Her features stayed immobile, her face an old mask of one who only gazes. Then slowly, like wind or wave, it broke and changed. She drew a sighing breath, put up her hand and passed it over her face, and seemed to wake. "What did you see, Mother?"

"I saw so much, Robin, I cannot tell it. And now I forget it. But it was much —"

"But what?"

"I can't tell, I tell ye! It's gone into forms of things as many as leaves, but what they are— And now it's all gone. I don't even know what it was about."

She moved from the loom house. "Come over and I'll give you something to eat and a bed for him to rest upon. Robin, you put the horse in the stable. Aye, it's fine weather, a real, golden day, but there's a storm coming up behind it."

CHAPTER XIX

“AND so,” said young Mr. Washington the surveyor, “Governor Dinwiddie was so good as to think that I could win through the wilderness and give his letter of remonstrance in the king’s name to the Frenchmen. So I started with Vanbraam and Gist and others in mid-November.”

“It would be desperately bad traveling, going to the Ohio in winter time!” said Conan.

“It was just that. Desperately bad weather delays and other delays—shifty Indians that might be for us and might be for the French half a dozen times in the round of the clock—and polite Frenchmen’s delays. And all the time rain, wind, snow and flood. But we did it—we got through to the fort at Venango on French Creek that goes into the Ohio and gave Legardeur de Saint Pierre, the commandant, His Excellency’s letter, received his answer, got away and back to Will’s Creek, and so home late in January. Indians in the French pay attacked us at one point, but for the rest it was policy and lies when it was not outright bravado, threat and boast!”

“They say they have a right to the Ohio.”

“Because of La Salle. But now they are on land that the world knows is Virginia. They’re bringing in settlers and their forts grow like a row of knitting. They are knitting up from New Orleans and knitting down from Lake Erie, and you may make sure they mean to start rows that run *east*. I heard from the Indians of those intentions of theirs, and indeed they themselves as good as told me—” He started up and walked the room filled with evening

lights and shadows. "It isn't any secret, this cloud in that quarter. The governor talks about it freely, and I may. You know what I thought when I looked from the hilltop yonder into Burke's Land? 'If there's war who knows where the waves will roll, or cease to roll?'"

Silence followed his speech. He himself seemed to deprecate his emotion and came back to his seat. Elizabeth sat with her two-year-old Andrew upon her knees. She with the others saw pictures, dim things that might happen, alarms from the north and west, forced abandonment of homes in Burke's Land, flight back into Burke's Tract, into the Great Valley. The mind rested there; there surely would be security! Two of Conan's men-at-wages, Walter Graeme and Will Wright, sat upon the bench by the wall. Said the first, "Isn't King George going to send soldiers over to us against those French?" And the second, "What are the Indians that will be for them, and what for us?"

"They've got the Chippeways, Ottawas and Shawnees and others now. If we don't look out Delawares and Catawbias and Cherokees will follow. We're clumsy at making friends. The king's ministers at home promise to send this year a couple of regiments. I don't know about a couple. Of course we'll raise the militia. Moreover a volunteer regiment is at this moment being recruited."

Said Elizabeth slowly, and to herself her hand seemed to be in John Selkirk's as she spoke, "The Indians have somewhat against us both, English and French."

The surveyor answered her. "In a measure I'm not denying it, Mrs. Burke. If I was an Indian—well, I reckon I'd lead a forlorn hope and be shot for it! I only hope I wouldn't do it with outrageous cruelty and massacre. We're all at sea with our rights and wrongs. There's a wind called Immediate Need and Our Own, and we drive before it, one people like another. I am a Virginian that

sees the king's majesty threatened here by France, his hereditary foe, and sees our homesteads and vales such as this threatened by those whom that foe may inflame—and in short I shall have a command in the volunteer regiment I spoke of."

Conan had sat more quietly than the others in the room. His hands were clasped behind his head—a favorite trick of his—and his raised face was caught and held in a shaft of light from the open door. It was a beautiful face, bronzed, thin, quiet, with a subtle play of feeling and of thought. The very deep blue eyes gave it remoteness and power as of another world, and yet no one could be so simple and childlike and homely in detail as Conan.

"I don't know what will come," he said, "and I don't know how to get ready for it. The way they tell you to get ready never seems to me to do it, to get what they say it will get. Of course, staying still doesn't either. To really get it there must be some road we don't take. We don't want French folk living on the Ohio and Missouri and Mississippi rivers. That's Virginia—that's England—we say it is, and we'll go to war to prove it is! If we don't prove it is, something fearful may happen to us. We may prove it, and apparently just the same thing happen. But that doesn't count. I get all mixed up about it, and Some One inside me sighs."

He unclasped his hands and moved from out the amber ray. "Of course we've heard rumors. There's been an uneasy feeling for a long time. I got it in Staunton when I was there in February—and of course they're not as exposed as we are. Well, what can be done here until it happens?"

"You can build forts."

"Yes, I suppose so. It seems the God-shown, sufficient thing to do."

As he spoke he went to the door and stood looking out. Burke's Land lay before him, hill and field and hollow, mountain and stream, green and gold and dusky rose and violet, scattered houses of log, sometimes seen, sometimes guessed by a clearing or a ploughed field, Mount Promise church, Martin's mill. The clearing under Burke's Mountain belonged to the Andersons, the feather of smoke on Plum Tree Hill was the McLeods' supper fire; above Singing Creek, Moore and Flannagan were burning brush; he could make out Robertson's cattle moving in the meadow by the river; there in the bend of the road Jardine was building the needed smithy. The unearthliness, the purple rather than green, the silverness, the clarity of early spring hung in the space from mountain rim to mountain rim. Conan looked out upon it all, and it seemed to be both priceless fair and poisoned. He spoke.

"To-morrow we had best gather the people either here or at Mount Promise. You shall tell them what you have told us. Then we can set about the fort."

That was what they did. The surveyor stayed two days in Burke's Land. The male population of this mountain valley drew together in the log church which served them in their remoteness and poverty for temple and guild hall and capitol. Young Mr. Washington spoke to them in a simple, manly, earnest, able way that inspired confidence. He hoped and they hoped that the storm would not break, or if it broke that it would be confined to the parts well to the north of this region, and would be short. He felt every certainty that the king's majesty would be victorious. The regulars, the volunteers, would give a good account of themselves. The French would be taught to rest content within their own borders which were ample enough. Any Indian warfare that had been brought about would be calmed with treaties and gifts. The whole thing might be short and

sharp, or it might not be at all. But he thought it would be, in some form or other, to some extent or other, and he held that Burke's Land and Burke's Tract, and not only they but the whole country west of the Blue Ridge, should consider their position. The militia everywhere should drill, become prompt and dependable. And each neighborhood should appoint or erect some good house with a stout palisade to become at need a fort. So said the young surveyor. The McLeods were tall, red Highlanders, scrawny and fierce. They seemed to hear the pipes screaming and offered their house for fort. Martin the miller chided them.

"Bless us, Duncan, we'll have time to get the spring ploughing done! You leap at War as though he were a long-lost brother! I'm not so anxious. But of course I'm ready to do my part."

Moore and Flannagan, big men, unwed, slow at the up-take but solid, came upon the miller's side. "It's not a dance, McLeod, or it's a devil's dance! But of course drill won't hurt any of us."

James Kennedy again was a different sort—a wild adventurer who had been in the back parts of New England and of Pennsylvania and on the lower Mississippi, in Louisiana, and on ships to the West Indies, and everywhere foregathered with danger, and yet was of the meekest aspect and the softest-spoken man in Burke's Land.

His say was, "The thing is all shaped out, friends! Else we shouldn't be here talking, and Mr. Washington's commission wouldn't be in his pocket, and Captain Joncaire up at Fort Duquesne wouldn't be sharpening his sword, and all the sachems wouldn't be sitting solemn as gods under council trees, and some English general or other wouldn't be kissing King George's hand to go over seas with something under a brigade. It's all shaped; it always is, and we'll take the

next step. I don't know what it is. It may be this, it may be that. We'll know when we take it."

There was silence in the church. Then John Selkirk rose and spoke. He stood, now almost an old man, tall, rugged, about him always a moving stillness, a poise, a hush, significance. "There is not yet war. It may come, it may even with probability come. If it does, it will be because all, or most, or enough to bring it, on all sides, say Yes! Not if, on all sides, they say No! Then it will not come. Questions will be settled other ways—less expensive ways. Perhaps they will not be what is called 'settled'; perhaps they will just drift away and be dissolved in some larger way of thinking. I know what you will say, my people, my sons, and this strong and good young man who is with us to-day. I know it all. I have heard it all my life, and my father and his father before him heard it all their lives. And yet I say, 'What ye strongly expect and build for ye shall receive—*having constructed it.*'"

He paused. He was standing upon the pulpit step, and it set him above and slightly over against the thirty or more in the church. Through the small windows and the open door came cross lights; all the interior hung brown and dusky. The frontiersmen, standing or seated, hardly outlined, seemed but thickenings of the shine and shadow. "No, Kennedy! We exercise choice," said the minister.

Kennedy did not answer, but Alexander Jardine the smith did. "Just so, Mr. Selkirk! So we don't choose that France shall lift our cattle and take our lands. And if she chooses to set loose the Indians, we'll choose to try to get some tribes on our side, and let dog tear dog! And not liking to be scalped we'll choose to build some forts and make some preparation against the day of trouble!"

An assenting murmur ran around. Conan spoke:

"You say, sir, 'If all sides say Aye! to peace, we'll

rest at peace, and bringing our questions to Reason and to Love accommodate them there.' But that's just it! All sides will not, and so we must dance to the loud piper although we hate the music."

"It's as he says, sir," said the surveyor earnestly. "Believe me, they are drawing their troops down from the Saint Lawrence, and their Indians are preparing the war paint. We must earn peace. God knows, I trust to a day in the future when there shall be peace for all!"

"I know you do," said the minister. "I know you, Conan, love a lovelier music. I know you, Alexander Jardine, sought your brother three days in the great snow until you found him and were nigh to death yourself. I see lights that play about you all. And if I were a French priest, set on the upper Ohio among French tongues, I would see light and know good of all souls there. If I were an Indian prophet in a gathering by the lodges I make no doubt the sparkling would run there too. Love there, love everywhere, from one to another. And still—and still—"

"You would not, Mr. Selkirk," said the smith, "have us tomahawked in our beds, our children butchered and our women carried off captive? And all our labor to go for naught and strangers have our homes?"

"No, smith, you know I would not."

"Well, then—"

Kennedy came unexpectedly in. "It happens anyhow when there is war. No amount of little forts help much. They help some folk, of course. They increase rage. Others out in the open get it the worse. Nothing that one does makes it anything but what it is. But we'll build, of course—two if it seems best—and we'll encourage some kind of drill, and keep our arms in order and let the women mold a store of bullets, and generally speaking set our ear

to the ground. There isn't anything else to do, whatever you may say, sir. Because whatever drives us will make us do just that!"

"What I say," said Jardine, "is that there is a deal of nonsense being talked here! That's with all respect to you, Mr. Selkirk. We know you, sir, for a good and brave man. You aren't a coward for all your talking. I don't mean that, either! It's the way saints talk. But we aren't saints — no, nor the Frenchmen aren't — nor the red men! And I suppose you want us to act according to our best judgment?"

John Selkirk smoothed with his thin, long-fingered hand the pulpit rail. He held his head down a little, his lips seemed to be moving. Then he raised it and spoke. "Yes, Humphrey. According to the Light within you."

William Watts, who had not yet spoken, a small, withered, active man with a dry voice like a grasshopper, now suddenly laid his mind before them. "You're all a-boding and a-boding, and after all what for? Haven't we been told that the king — God bless him! — is sending ships and a general and his officers and soldiers all in red? They'll do the job."

"We must be prepared to help them," said Mr. Washington, "since they come for us."

"We'll have to billet them," pursued the grasshopper. "I've been there before, in the old country! And of course they come for us, but a little also for the gilded glory and to fret France across the narrow seas. So let them save us, say I!"

"They will fight, and gallantly," said the surveyor, "but in the end it is to us to save ourselves."

"And isn't it also possible, sir," persisted the grasshopper, "that it will all blow aside and there won't be any war anyhow, and we'll all go on as we are going?"

"Yes, it's possible. Anything is possible."

"Well, I'm not going to worry till my time comes," said the grasshopper, "even if I give my voice to make the fort."

CHAPTER XX

WHEN months had gone by it seemed that the grasshopper had been in the right of it. It was a still, bright summer in Burke's Land, with the right spacing of rain and sun, neither too warm nor too cool, and every crop doing well. Then in July appeared one day at Conan's Andrew Selkirk and his eldest boy, Gregory, having ridden from Burke's Tract since yesterday. Andrew wore a perturbed face.

"Have you heard the news?"

"No! What is it?"

"There's been an affair between our Virginia regiment helped by a few regulars and the French at the Great Meadows on Ohio. Colonel Fry is dead and Colonel Washington commanded. We were outnumbered and had to give up the Fort — Fort Necessity. We lost maybe a hundred, and they lost more. It's the beginning, I'm afraid!"

"What will you do, Andrew, in Burke's Tract?"

"Hold hard and see what happens. Give me something to drink, Elizabeth. We've been riding long and I'm tired. Gregory is a chieftain, though!"

Gregory colored at the praise and his eyes shone. "May I go find the boys, Aunt?"

"Aye. They're with the men in the fields. But you are safe in the Great Valley? It's we to the west that may have to be moving!"

"Aye, I say too that it will be better for you to remove than to try to brave it out here. That is, if the waves roll everywhere." He drank of the beer she brought him. "Where's Conan? I want to see the fort you made. We're

going to raise one near Mt. Olivet and another by First Man's Creek. Of course we're pretty well east and south, and there are a lot of us. I don't really think we're endangered. It's only to be on the safe side. It's different with you here. All of you with Father and Mother and Aunt Kirstie and Robin can't do better than to come to Rob and Phemie and Nancy and me. That's what I rode here to say."

"Thank you, Brother, heartily! Conan won't move, and certainly Father won't move until every one in Burke's Land is going."

"Well, it mayn't come to it," said Andrew. "God knows I hope it won't! But I wanted you to know how I felt about it. Tam writes from Williamsburgh—here's his letter—he's anxious, too, about you."

Gregory and Matthew and John left the cornfield for Singing Creek and the swimming hole, heaven on a hot July day. Stripping, they dived in. Willow, sycamore, maple fringed them about; overhead, a round platter of Delft blue. They splashed and ducked one another and shouted,—Gregory near to fourteen, Matthew under nine, John seven, Wat Graeme stretching toward Gregory. Wat Graeme had charge of the two young Burkes, but they were well able to take care of themselves. When all had swum and dived and whooped enough they came out and dried themselves in the sun without the sycamores.

"Have you seen any Indians lately?"

Wat Graeme answered, "Four came by when we were working in the new field. They wanted to know what the fort was for. Father told them 'twas to store skins in. Then they went on up to the house and Mrs. Burke gave them something to eat. She always does."

Matthew lay upon his young back and threw pebbles at the blue platter. He had a way of withdrawing himself

from the general conversation and seeking his own with something or some one invisible. Now it seemed to be with some fay somewhere. He was stringing rhymes together:

“The day is bright,
It gives us might.
The trees stand round
The dry, warm ground.”

Conan came from the fields to the house. “Ha, Andrew! I’m glad to see you.” After dinner they rode to the fort. It stood not far from Mount Promise Church, and at present William Watts and his son, Long Tom, were its only keepers. For model Burke’s Land had taken Burke’s Fort in the Blue Ridge. A tall and stout stockade went around an enclosure that held rows of cabins much like sheds, with a central blockhouse. All had loopholes, the stockade gate was high and thick, a spring gurgled inside, all trees for a distance around had been cut down.

“It was hard work for Burke’s Land for a month,” said Conan. “But here it stands now, and may it never be used! We named it after Kennedy. Fort Kennedy.”

“Why not after you?”

“I did not want it.”

“Well, we can’t do better than to build like it. Though we’re not frontier, and I don’t believe it will hit us.”

“I don’t believe it will hit any of us,” quoth William Watts. “The king will take care of us!”

“Tam says it is certain that troops will be sent over this year”

Andrew went likewise, taking Gregory with him, to see his father and mother. His mother was ailing, had been so since the spring time. “I’m going, Andrew! I’m going to make another great voyage.”

"Oh, no, Mother, you aren't! As soon as the cool weather comes you'll be better"

"No! But it will be spring weather all the time, I'm thinking, or October weather, for that's the loveliest here. But spring's the loveliest in Scotland. We talk a deal of Scotland, Andrew, Kirstie and me."

"You must get well, Mother, so that you can come over to Burke's Tract and see how Nancy and the children and me and the new house are getting on"

"Aye, I will some day, but not now. Gregory's a fine laddie. Kirstie, isn't there a cake of maple sugar?"

The minister was with Hector Mactavish who had cut himself while felling a tree and been like to bleed to death. It was some way and he would not be back till nightfall. "It's all harmonious here?" asked Andrew.

"In most ways, aye! Now and then he runs against them, and they hold up their hands like, but for all that he's a mighty cared-for man. We haven't Gellatlys and Gows here — not that, as he says, there isn't much good in them. And I must say," said Jean, "that your father keeps silence more as he grows older."

"He draws wisdom into his hands," said Kirstie. "I watch him doing it. He's acting somewhere all the time, where men know nothing of it"

Gregory ate his cake of brown sugar before the house in company with young Watch, the grandson of old Watch. The dog begged for bits of sugar and the boy gave them, then the two strayed together down the steep bank to the monster sugar tree that stood by the road. It was not much of a road, and hours might go by and nothing human appear upon it. Then again there might be what the women in the manse above called "really travel." A dozen might pass in one day. Gregory, perched among the roots of the sugar maple, spied specks in the distance which, enlarging, be-

came in time two boys of about his own age, Peter Jardine and Henry Flannagan, a collie, and their convoy, a young and gentle bull. When they found the visitor from Burke's Tract they all stopped under the sugar tree. The three lads had met before.

"Where are you going?"

"To the Robertsons with this bull."

"Stop a while, can't you? I have to wait for my father."

When they had fastened the young bull to a locust tree with a deerhide tug they all sat down in the sun and shade and Gregory displayed a knife that his Uncle Thomas had sent him from Williamsburgh by Mr. Trabue, the Indian trader, when last he came through the Valley. It was a fine knife. The others admired and wished for uncles at capitals. In various ways Gregory's equipment marked the difference between Burke's Tract and Burke's Land. Peter and Henry went bare-legged this summer weather, though they had moccasins upon their feet. But Gregory had good knitted hose and shoes. The latter however was because he was Andrew's son. Plenty in Burke's Tract wore moccasins. He had a ruffle to his shirt and a cock to his hat. Peter and Henry whistled for their own superiorities. The great bear hunt—they hadn't had anything like that in Burke's Tract!

The sun shone, white cloud ships—the only ships these mountaineers had ever seen—sailed overhead. The two dogs were friendly by the little stream, the young bull cropped the sweet grass. Gregory possessed a reasonable mind and owned that they had had no such bear hunt in Burke's Tract, not since he could remember. But the wagons and the pack horses in the fall—how about them? How many did they send to Staunton for stores? Staunton and even across the Blue Ridge. From Burke's Tract they sent seven wagons, great ones, the greatest ever, with

four horses to each, and little wagons beside, and pack horses and bells, and men and boys and their dogs, and there went behind the wagon train and the pack horses two droves of cattle and a great flock of sheep, and ten of his father's horses to sell.

"I'm telling you it was something to see! When they went, and when the wagons and the pack horses came back with all kinds of things!"

No. Burke's Land could not compete there. Burke's Tract perhaps, though, had not always been so sumptuous. Gregory acknowledged it. "No, at first, when I was a baby, it was just like this or worse."

"Can you hoot just like an owl?"

"Of course!" He hooted.

"That's the common kind. Can you do like this one?"

Peter produced a sound the weirdest and loneliest ever. It seemed to come moreover from a considerable distance. So eerie, melancholy and menacing was it that the bright day about the sugar tree appeared to shiver. "We don't hear that one often," said Gregory. "I can't do it as well as you can. But here's your catamount!"

The catamount screamed. Down by the stream the dogs moved and the bull raised his head, but in a moment they fell again to their own devices. "You can startle them," quoth Henry, "but that's all. They've got to have the scent. But you can fool humans every time!"

Peter bleated like a fawn, after which Gregory most admirably gobbled like a turkey. From a patch of tall grass beside the road rose a strange, dry, rapid sound, not loud but insistent. Again the animals moved, and Gregory and Peter had a start until they saw that Henry was missing. Then, "Come out of that, you old rattlesnake!"

Henry rose from the grass and returned to the tree. Peter gave a long wolf howl. Up in the manse Kirstie said, "It's

those boys, Jeannie. I saw Peter Jardine and Henry Flanagan coming up the road. Gregory's with them at the sugar tree."

"They've got the hang of most cries," said Andrew. "Do you remember the first catamount and wolf, Mother eighteen years ago?"

"Aye, it's all of that, Andrew. So much has happened! It was all wilderness then, and now we are growing a big country. Well, we've worked hard."

"That's why it is going to be what it will be! Work and think," said Andrew. "Think it out, then don't grudge toil."

Down the sunny road came swinging a young man, Tom Kennedy, and stopped when he reached the sugar tree. "Hey, boys! And what d'ye think you are doing?"

"Just having fun, Tom Kennedy"

No one minded Tom Kennedy, though they minded his father. He was featherweight, was Tom. Sun and air played round and through him as it does with thistledown. But he had a talent and that was story-telling. Now he sat cross-legged on a twisted root. "D'ye want me to tell you about the fish I caught on Friday below the beaver dam?" He told it with fantastic circumstance, then. "D'ye want me to tell you about the Spirit I saw sitting on a sycamore bough where the road forks?" Then, "D'ye want me to tell you about Jack and the Beanstalk and the Giant's House and Harp of Gold?"

They sat in an absorbed cluster, the tale-teller and the listening youths. "So Jack ran and the Giant ran, and Jack ran and the Giant ran, and the Beanstalk grew big and green before them with scarlet blossoms—"

Young Watch and Peter's collie were barking. Along the road walked an Indian and came to the tree and the four beneath it.

"How? Good day! Top of the morning to you!"

"Can't you say *Bon jour*?" asked Tom Kennedy.

"My French fathers say it," answered the Indian. "*Bon jour*!"

He was a young man with a bold nose and thin straight lips and a high forehead. He had a gun and looked as though he had been some time upon the trail.

"From Last Leap way," remarked Peter.

Kennedy said, "Traveling alone?"

The Indian nodded. "I wished to see this country."

"Do you like it?"

"It is my country. My fathers lived here."

As he spoke he sat down in the dust of the road. His gun rested against him. With his two hands he gathered the loam and sand and gravel and let them stream through his fingers.

"This was a trail. You made it what you call a road. I had a bow and arrows. Now I have a gun. I traded ten bear skins for it. Am I happier? You call this country yours. Your chiefs fooled our chiefs, and they gave you a great wampum string and said, 'Very well, live here, and we will keep the sunset sky over our towns and our hunting grounds.' But our voice, the voice of all of us, was not in their voice. Our voice—the voice of red men like the leaves and like the waters—shouts against you." He raised his voice; it resounded, it shouted. "Go back! Go back! Go back, Englishmen, to the sea. You came out of it. Go back to it!"

As suddenly again he sat silent, heaping more loam and sand and gravel.

"How about Frenchmen?" demanded Gregory with grave, young indignation.

"They will go too. You take in winter a great stick to push a log with. In the end both go to the fire."

"A moment ago it was the sea."

"Sea or fire or bullet or knife, it is the same." The Indian stood up. "Good-by! I will climb that mountain. I will see the sun go down and not a fire below me from any lodge built by my people where once we had many. I will kindle my own fire there and sleep there. In the morning I will turn again to the river whence I came. Good-by, ocean folk!"

He waved his arm and was gone along the road from which presently one departed if one desired to climb to the cliff top of Wild Cat Mountain. Trees hid him.

Tom Kennedy spoke doubtfully, "I reckon there be those who'd say we ought to stop him and bring him before a magistrate. — But it wouldn't be easy to stop him!"

"No, sir-ee!" said Henry. "He's got a gun and a tomahawk and a knife. He slipped in from Last Leap way and he'll slip out."

"But we might hurry and tell my father and Uncle Conan," suggested Gregory. "They could raise a dozen men and take him to-night while he's asleep on Wild Cat."

Tom Kennedy laughed. "He isn't going to sleep on Wild Cat! He'll go up and build a fire and leave it to take care of itself and be a jack-o'-lantern to us down here. He'll be behind Last Leap again before midnight! Yon was a great dare and shake of the lifted hand and a coming to pick a tale to tell! You boys wouldn't believe how many things are done in order to gather tales!"

He stretched himself. "Shall I finish Jack and the Beanstalk?"

CHAPTER XXI

BUT the summer passed and the fort stood empty. Autumn brought her queen's raiment, and still there was formal peace. "Maybe they'll be using it," said Barb one day, "to settle things! Maybe they two kings are holding hands the day in the glittering palaces."

It was Will Wright to whom she said it. "Maybe you're right, Barb. It's peaceful enough for the Lord Jesus, this weather!"

Elizabeth heard them. With Eileen at her skirts she came from the farther trees, upon her head, supported by her hand, a basket half filled with wild grapes. The others also were gathering; she meant to make jelly for the children for their bread through the winter. For sugar, they got a small amount from Staunton, but most that they had came from the sugar maples tapped in the early spring. They kept bees too; there was always a jar of honey. Will Wright, halfway up a linden overrun by a vast vine, cut the bunches with his knife and threw them down. Elizabeth and Barb and Eileen gathered them into the baskets. The baskets were woven from willow by old Denis Scott.

"I can't but think it too, Barb," said Elizabeth. "It's a crystal day! Why shouldn't our minds grow so to one another?" She set her basket on the ground and kneeling heaped the grapes within it. "As for the Lord Jesus, he walks day and night, day and night, through our hearts, through our hearts. And he listens and he listens."

"Aye!" said Barb. "Well, they two kings may make it up." She rose, lifting her basket, a dark, strong young woman with black hair, black eyes and rosy cheeks. Will

Wright descended from the linden. He took Elizabeth's basket and, presently, Eileen crying that she was tired, shouldered her likewise. All moved together in simplicity and friendliness through the thinning wood toward the home buildings. Where the trees met the autumn meadow, in a zone of fern and goldenrod and farewell-summer, gentian and boneset and heaven knew what, they found Mother Dick, wandering and stooping, straightening herself and stooping again. She was after herbs. "I've got the elecampane, Elizabeth. Spikenard and elecampane for your mother."

"She thought that the last eased her."

"Aye, it's got that virtue in it that it makes pain easier. — But when God wants you, you must go."

"You think she is going!"

"She has the air of it around her," answered Mother Dick. "The air and the fine white light. There now, Elizabeth! There now!"

Eileen was picking flowers. Barb and Will, at the mistress' gesture, had moved on, carrying the baskets of grapes. Elizabeth sat her down on the dry earth and wept. "Oh, mother is mother — mother is mother!"

"Aye, that's the way it's felt when they go. Mrs. Selkirk's ready — a simple, loving, ready soul."

But again Time took his own time that year. The leaves were off the trees before Jean Selkirk went. Then she died in her husband's arms, her children about her, all save Phemie and Rob and Nancy. Tam had come from Williamsburgh a month before, staying all that time in Burke's Land. She said that she was ready and willing to go — that her life had been happy but she was ready and willing to go. "And you'll write to Jean that I'll not forget her there any more than here." They thought that she was gone, but she spoke again. "Kirstie! I can't see you

clearly any more, and yet — and that's surprising! — I see you very clearly too! Aye, John, aye!" She died.

It was a very still, purple day when they buried her body by a cedar in Mount Promise churchyard. All Burke's Land was there, and the minister's face, they said afterwards, looked like some prophet's face out of the Old Testament. So they all went home, and that evening and night white mists, ascending and descending, wrapped the valley floor, the hills and the mountains. In the morning all things were veiled, and the stillness was as of the land after the flood. The fire on the hearth felt good. Kirstie and Andrew and Tam and Robin sat before it. In the night, at the Murdochs, a child had died of croup, and at dawn a boy had come for the minister. "Mother says, sir, please, please come! She says tell you she knows your own heart's sore, but please come!" He had gone, and Kirstie had given her nephews breakfast, and now they sat about the fire until the mist should lift a little. Tam smoked but Andrew rarely took a pipe, and Robin only when he was in the forest.

Tam was grown a fine man, keen-faced, keen-witted, and with an air about him of a wider, more varied society than New Virginia as yet could offer. Full-fledged lawyer now, with practice running into his hands, esteemed for shrewdness, caution, grasp of his case, and a telling speech, he might return, as had been his vision, to the Great Valley and build his fortune as it built its, or he might tarry in the capital of the Colony. He felt his importance as Andrew felt his, but he never obtruded it upon any audience whatever. He and Andrew alike were able men, each in his own way.

So they sat by the fire and the white mist filled the bowl of Burke's Land. Kirstie and Robin had risen early and made all things straight about the place after the coming and going of yesterday. Now Kirstie sat with folded hands,

thought in pictures playing quietly through her mind. Martha Irving was coming on the morrow to stay and work. Martha was a good woman, knowing well how to bake and brew, sweep and spin. Elizabeth had taken her wages upon herself. Elizabeth was a tower to them all, Elizabeth and Conan. Day after to-morrow Kirstie meant to open school again. She loved her small, small schoolhouse, under vast trees, by running water. She loved the boys and girls she taught; she loved the teaching, the dealing with beautiful words and bright scraps of knowledge about the marvellous earth. She saw school re-beginning. At recess they would gather hickory nuts and walnuts, black haws and frost-ripened persimmons. After school the boys must get faggots for the woodpile. It was growing cold; they must have fire if she kept school open till Christmas. — Cold. — It was chill to-day, in the clinging mist, in the graveyard. "And what of that, Jeannie? You're not there!" Many a scene in Scotland began to flit before her eyes. "How we remember together!" said Kirstie.

An ember parted, the clock struck. Rising, Robin went to the door. "It's lifting. I think I'll take my gun and Watch out for a little while, Aunt Kirstie."

He went. Tam knocked the ashes from his long pipe. "Robin's a man dropped in the right place. It doesn't often happen! He's just a looking glass for the forest side of life."

"I love him," said Kirstie. "He's innocent and he has that kind of wisdom. I couldn't picture Burke's Land without him!"

Andrew said, "Aye, he belongs to the western side of things. As we push west and push west, his kind'll go before."

"And when we come to the South Sea?"

"He'll still find a west somehow. Come round again, I

reckon. I don't reckon," said Andrew slowly, "the tongue will matter if the spirit's the same."

He was not wont to speak imaginatively like that, but death and roused memory and anticipation, and the silence and whiteness of the day shook it from him. "Aye," he said, and stood up from the settle. "He's simple — Robin!"

So saying, he too went to the door. "Wild Cat Mountain is out clear. It won't be long before we'll see the sun. Come, Tam, let's go up to Conan's."

The two brothers walked upon the misty road, all damp and fragrant of falling leaf and deep soil, forest fed through ages heaped on ages. But the mountain tops were clearly drawn, and the hills showed through rifts in the now moving fleece. They were Scotch and taciturn, but to-day, though with silences between, they talked. In one of these silences they caught other voices — two women bitterly upbraiding each other — and in the thinning mist made out the two who had encountered where a path diverged beside an abandoned tub mill. They were of an age, two gaunt, embrowned women, flushed and threatening. Their words came plain, the voice of one hoarse, the other shrill.

"All I say is, If a Berry dares set his foot the other side those blazed trees he'll get shot!"

"Thank ye for the warning, and I'll be returning the kindness! If a Gurdy just so much as touches a hoe to that field that's ours, not yours, he'll be a clod with the other clods before a crow can wink!"

The first gave a screech of laughter. "There's a lot of us Gurdys!"

"Are there? Well, Berrys aren't so seldom either!"

The light, soft earth hid footfalls and the mist cloaked, but the two now saw the walking men and desisted until they were by.

"Why do anything about her? Then probably she won't do anything about us."

"There are our wealth and pride and honor. I don't suppose it would ruin you if Munro kept that fallow field you're lawing over. Suppose you let him."

"That! That's quite different!"

"Is it? God knows! I don't. — Well," said Tam, "General Braddock is in New York, and I hope they'll send him more troops, for I don't think he's got enough. No one in Williamsburgh does. Governor Dinwiddie throws up his hands and gets redder and redder in the face. They don't at home in England precisely know our conditions or our vastness. They never have, and I don't know that they ever will."

He broke from a haw bush beside the path a branch laden with the small flat, sweet, black fruit and ate as he walked, spitting out the seeds.

So they came to Conan's and found him down by the tan vat well from the house, and bitingly chiding his man Ninian who was to have brought a load of bark and had not. The weather or the strain or some old mood unleashed might be responsible. He was so infrequently angry that when it happened it appalled. It was as though an unsuspected, deep abyss in a fair country opened, and a shade came up. His face paled, his eyes narrowed, his lips smiled, and all that he found to say fell like a lash and a cold rain. He stood ten feet from Ninian, but the latter put up a crooked arm as though against physical blows. A sullen, hoarse voice came from behind it.

"I would have brought that bark but —"

"Here comes your excuse, and not a whit different from the last time! 'I would have brought it, but —' You'll serve God so at the last. 'I would have brought it but —' Go and get it!"

Ninian moved away, into the bushes. At the edge came back his voice. "The storm swelled Wild Cat Run so there wasn't any getting it across."

Silence followed his speech, then Conan's voice rose again. "Why didn't you tell me so?" He passed his hands across his face. "Go away, Ninian! It's something in the day."

Andrew and Tam came into the round of bare earth where the skins of deer were turned into leather. The three greeted. "Wait for me a moment," said Conan, "till I get my temper down."

Turning from them he walked across and across again the trampled cirque, then suddenly plunged into the bushes after the retreating figure of Ninian. "Ninian!"

Ninian stood still. The other came up to him. "I'm sorry! I don't know why I give loose to mercilessness like that sometimes. Get the bark when the water goes down. I know you can't do it earlier. I'm sorry!"

Ninian looked at him still surlily. "Big folks when they blame little folks ought to ransack their own ways a little."

"That's quite true, and they'll probably stumble pretty quick on injustice. Well, go now, and I'll try to do more looking after my own."

Ninian departed. Conan returned to the others. "There's something in the air. I don't know what it is, but I might have lessened it, not heightened it. — Well, let's go to the house."

CHAPTER XXII

TAM returned with Andrew to Burke's Tract and from there to Staunton and thence east to the Blue Ridge and across, and by easy stages to Richmond and so home to Williamsburgh, his pleasant lodging and his rivals and cronies. And everywhere rose talk of the red-coated Regulars and how they would put the French in their place — just as Marlborough had done! The majority thought of it as glory and a short shrift for the foe, never as the beginning in two continents of the Seven Years' War. That was complacent talk, but there arose also irritated talk, for it turned out that auxiliary colonials, volunteers, militia, were also to be shown their places. Officers in the provincial bodies were all very well, but officers in the British regiments stood as Olympians above. Young George Washington, resigning his commission, retired to Mount Vernon, the plantation on the Potomac, now his through the death of a brother. The Colonials, not for the first time, disliked the way in which they were regarded.

The small, American capitals buzzed. Then it was learned that General Braddock had never desired that the brave Virginians and others should feel that England made distinctions. As for that gallant and trusted young officer, Colonel Washington, he begged him to become for the campaign his, General Braddock's, volunteer aide-de-camp. For the campaign itself — it was a rude and long way the army must go to the Youghiogheny and the Monongahela, names as barbarous as the country through which those rivers flowed! Where were the roads and the bridges, and how could wagons traverse the wilderness? Plainly noth-

ing might be done till spring, and even then the engineers would have their work cut out for them! He listened with patience to colonial advice. "Use pack horses for ammunition and other irreducible minima—and for the rest live from the forest." But such hand-to-mouth action seemed unfit, undignified, and to invite mutiny and disaster. So the winter wheeled away. And more and more, all the time, came sad relations of Indian attack and murder in the dead of night, on the long frontier. Sometimes there came tales of triumphant retaliation, even of forestallings.

In the Great Valley, in Burke's Tract and Burke's Land, the people listened avidly to all rumors and stories. But news traveled slowly, and much news never reached them at all. And the unhappinesses were as yet away from them. It was a long way, across a wilderness, to the Holston or the New River, or the Monongahela. What they did feel was the drift away of young or unattached men, volunteering, enlisting, to go help the Regulars. The Powers That Were said that it was very difficult to procure these men to go, to leave home, to see their mountains sink behind them and come east to Belhaven, or Alexandria as it was now called, whence the army would start when it did start. But enough were procured to make a difference in the Valley, in Burke's Tract and Burke's Land.

It made a difference. And the word "Indian" was said with a new intonation, though no Indians were seen. But trouble was so far away men thought it might never catch up. The Regulars would dispose of the French, and the French disposed of, the Indians would sink back. The men would come back from the wars and all things would be as they were. So in this part of the world through that autumn and winter folk went about their concerns. Men and women died, children were born; young couples, and sometimes older ones married; people went to church, very occa-

sionally they had some other merrymaking; men took their guns and sought game for food and hunted wolves for their heads. Stock was cared for, trees were felled; with the advance of winter a great amount of work went on indoors. There was always enough to do. When leisure fell there were the fire, the children, tobacco, home-brewed ale, maybe a book or some game. Thought too; one could always think and plan. The future now. That field forever enticed. What shall we do in the future—this land, this family, this self?

Before Christmas, before the winter set in hard and fast, in weather that was yet Indian Summer, Conan and Elizabeth and with them Matthew and John, Matthew behind his father on old Tyrone, John behind his mother on Star, and Walter Graeme on Bonny Lass with their bag of needments, all went over the mountain to Burke's Tract and to Andrew's for a week. Conan had business to attend to; Elizabeth had not seen Nancy and Phemie for a long while. The two boys had no errand, but they felt joy in their small, bounding hearts.

To Elizabeth, Burke's Tract must always be first and dear home, where she grew up, where she met Conan, where they loved and for years lived, where the children were born. The river, First Man Mountain, the wider fields, the better houses, Eagle Ridge with a red, low sun striking against it, Mt. Olivet church, the manse where dwelled the Reverend Isaac Saunderson who had never a doubt. She saw the smoke from the Gellatlys' house. Anger reddened her cheek, stiffened her frame.

"What is it, Mother?" asked John.

"Nothing, my bairn, or something, as you please. Mother thought of a snake."

Andrew's house, the largest and best in Burke's Tract, stood in the midst of wide meadows, over which in the still

mild weather roamed his droves and herds. From the first he had steadily thought "Horses and cattle for a country that more and more will need both." Now all this end of the Great Valley bought from him. He had barns and pens, and back of his house, under a hill shaggy with pines, stood a row of cabins, quarters for his bondmen and wage men. He had a number of these now, black and white. He saw Gregory and Jock, and they saw themselves, growing up to help and be part and lot of a Great Valley estate and fortune. What did it matter if the houses were yet log and of no great size, if there were forest and untended champagne and rudeness of conditions? Not always would it be so! As for the girls, Deborah and Anne and Judith, he would portion them well when they came to marry.

Mrs. Andrew Selkirk, with a comely body and face and a brisk step, was like enough to Nancy Milliken of the small house in a drift of colored leaves in the Williamsburgh Street and Nancy Selkirk of the long road to the Blue Ridge. And Phemie, who came with Jean to spend the day, was changed and not changed in just the same way. "And I?" thought Elizabeth. "I've changed and yet I am the same. I am the same and yet I change. It's puzzling, being a human being!"

The visit was happy save for the day when there arose the question if or if not Conan was going to let John Gelatly have the piece of land that he so greatly desired.

"He wants it for his mill. It's much the best place."

"Aye. Well, let him go farther and fare worse!"

"That wedge of land is no good to us."

"It is good to me if it makes him do just that."

"That is not Christian, Bess."

"Shall he and Esther be rewarded for persecuting us — for persecuting Father? No! Don't let him have it, Conan!"

"I won't if you are so set against it. But —"

"I shall not tell Father. I'm willing to suppose I'm doing wrong. But when it comes to saying, 'Here, John and Esther Gellatly, here is just the place for your mill!' — I can't do it."

The weather changed while they were in Burke's Tract. From a faint warmth and antique richness of faded color it became cold and gray, with a roof even and high and pallid. "Snow is coming," said every one, and the Burke Land folk, "We must get home."

Star and Bonny Lass and old Tyrone, Conan and Elizabeth and the boys and Walter Graeme, took the road after warm farewells. Elizabeth and Nancy clung together. "I don't really believe in their old war, but if it comes, Elizabeth, all of you and Father and Aunt Kirstie and Robin come right 'over the mountain. There's room and a hug and kiss for you here!"

"We'll remember, but —"

"No 'but' about it! You come! I hear folk say we aren't wholly safe here, but anyhow, we're safer than Burke's Land!"

"It mayn't happen at all. I know Father prays each day and all day long. The rest of us just go on walking and talking in our sleep. Not Conan quite —. Well, good-by, good-by!"

They left Andrew's quite early in the morning. In an hour or so it began to snow, and presently First Man Mountain, sinking anyhow into the east behind them, became veiled indeed. Before them, the high and gray Alleghany wall likewise dimmed. Yet it was not blinding snow; it fell straight, with little wind, and they plodded on. At first Matthew and John had been talkative. "When are we coming again, Father?"

"I don't know, Mat."

"Grandfather would say, 'When God wills.' But I'd like to do it next month, Father."

"Oh, that's too early!"

"Next time can't we take the dogs? Hector, anyhow!"

"We'll see. You had grand times, didn't you?"

"Aye.—Deborah's a better girl than Eileen."

"Oh, no, she isn't! She's only older.—You and John must love and take care of Eileen and Andrew."

"Didn't you hear a wolf then, Father, away off?"

John chattered to his mother of all he had seen and done. Walter Graeme thought of young Wat at home, and of young Gregory Selkirk, and of how different things were for different folk. He supposed there was sense in it somewhere, but if young Wat had all those fine chances —

The road continually whitened. But it was windless and not very cold, and they made good progress. The boys ceased to talk. The start had been early; they were sleepy now and somewhat hungry. The young heads rested against the elders — to Matthew and John the world began to go by like a lullaby and a cradle rocking. And then they were at the foot of Long Mountain, at the blasted oak and the empty hut thereby where travelers over Long usually built their fire and took their rest for a while, and their father was saying, "We'll make a fire and warm and eat, but then we'd best go on."

They built a fine fire, the boys helping Walter Graeme. Beautifully it roared and leaped and delightful it felt. They had bread and meat with them and Nancy had put in the big wallet a flask of peach brandy. The horses, too, had a little bran and oats. Every one was so comfortable, it seemed a pity to have to mount again. The flakes were now white and big.

"They're like," said Conan, "the flakes the day you and I met under the sycamore, by the river."

He and Elizabeth were seated upon a log a little removed from the others. Rosy light and warmth laved them but they sat looking out and away where in the still forest the veil forever moved.

"Yes. It seemed to me that a piece of faëry was moving toward me—and then it grew more real than anything on earth. I came with a clap of the hands into Reality!"

"And I the same. Do you suppose we'll ever have a higher Reality than this?"

"Not if any of us are left out."

"I don't think we'll be left out. We couldn't be. But one day—Knowledge!"

"Yes, so that we be loving still."

"Oh, we'll be loving still!" He put his hand over hers. "You're fairer to me now than you were that day—a greater thing!"

"Oh, the snow, how it falls! We had best be going, Conan."

"Yes."

They put out the fire and took the road again. The road now became a trail only. No wagons came as yet over Long Mountain, all goods being brought by pack horse. Long Mountain was likewise High Mountain. Plod, plod, plod, in the now swirling snow. The trees were blazed and that was well. "We can't see anything but the road, can we, Father?" asked Matthew.

"No."

Halfway up Long Mountain it began to be difficult to see the road. "It's growing a regular storm!" said Walter Graeme. "It seems to me, saving what you think of it, sir, that we might do well to go back to the hut."

Conan waited before answering, then. "If we were snowed in there, it would be worse than struggling on home."

"Oh, let us go on!" cried Elizabeth.

"The road is covered, and it is hard to see the blazes on the trees. But we know it, and the horses too. We'll go on, Walter."

In three hours they were at the top, but beaten and endangered. Here all the winds of heaven loosed themselves. The lifted snow met the falling snow; they were wrapped in sheets and whirling forms. Here were drifts. The horses came over knees, plunged, struggled, won to the swept earth and stood with wild eyes and frightened breathing. Nothing could be seen; no road and few trees; moreover, the gray was not wholly the storm. Late afternoon had its fingers upon the world. John was crying silently. His mother had moved him before her upon Star. He clung to her. "I'm so cold and tired, Mother."

"There, my lamb, be brave! Matthew's not crying. — Conan, do you think we can tell the way, going down?"

"We must."

"I'm thinking of the rocks. If we get among them —"

"Yes, I too. We'll have to take the risk. It's growing colder steadily. We would perish anywhere on the mountain to-night. I wish that I had been wiser!"

"No one reckoned with this storm — Andrew nor no one. No one could see it coming."

"Come, then! This is the way."

But in a couple of hundred yards it became the question, "Was it the way?" The snow bewildered. All forms had become monstrous and shifting. Underfoot was no clearing or print, only heaped and hollowed white. On either hand the trees should be standing back from the trail. At first they went by the reality of that, and then by the appearance, and then trees rose in their path and stood close around them, the gnarled, shortened, twisted trees of the heights. They had left the way.

Well, they must get back to it; that was all there was of that! They thought that they had it, then they were not so sure, then not sure at all, then had every certainty that it was vanished from them. In a few minutes, suddenly, they recovered it. They went with great wariness, but in no time it was gone again. They found it once more, then lost it and in no way could recover it. All the time the day was dimming. The minds of the two men and the woman were busy trying to frame a picture. The descent of Long Mountain was broken by ravines, boulders, cliffs and precipices. The way wound above the line of them, then downward through a right gap. But what if they were below the way? And even as they tried to make the map, there towered beside them a shrouded rock shaped like a tower, with a pine tree grappled to its summit like a flag. They stood still, a painful stricture about the heart. "Is it the great rock above Laurel Creek?"

"Maybe."

Walter Graeme spoke his mind: "We'll never get out of here after night! The horses may break a leg, or go over an edge and down twenty feet any minute. We've got to find the road."

"Yes. I'll go ahead. Tyrone knows more than Star or Bonny Lass. Walter, I'm going to put Matthew before you."

He made the transfer, the boy obeying, though he was loth to leave his father. He gave him a final hug. "Oh, Father, don't get hurt!"

"Take care, Conan, take care!" Elizabeth's voice was sharp with anxiety. She held John close to her, her cloak around them both. All were masked with snow; they looked themselves pale bits of moving weather. They felt cold, great weariness and fear. Even the children, even the horses, saw that they might never get home.

Conan and Tyrone went ahead, slow, slow and cautious each step. Huge boulders were about them, twisted trees and shrubs of laurel. The leaves of the laurel were white, not green. On the earth and in the air snow, the wind whistling and whirling, and night at no distance. Old Tyrone, with his own life and his master's and maybe the others, in his keeping, went on warily.

They came out living; up the slope, back into what might be the way, into what, when four tall pines, regularly spaced, loomed before them, they knew to be the way. Conan stroked Tyrone's neck. "Good Tyrone! Now if we can keep it!"

By hook and crook, with gaps when they lost it, they kept it or its general direction, not erring again toward the rocks. Before the pitch dark fell they were down Long Mountain. Then, suddenly, the snow stopped falling, the wind lessened. In another half-hour the clouds rolled away and a three-quarter, glittering moon looked down upon and lighted Burke's Land.

Conan rode now beside Elizabeth. "It's over," he said. "We'll get home. At one time I didn't think we would."

"Nor I. I am thankful!"

"We would have gone together, and the two boys with us. Gone to sleep together in the snow, we and Walter Graeme, and waked together."

"Oh, whenever it is, Conan, I hope it will be together for you and me!"

"Not if the children are small—"

She felt him smiling in the moonlight and she smiled too, for all that they were nearly frozen and dead with weariness. They did not speak again. The children were sleeping, held before them, and afar, across yet a league of winter night, they saw a small earth star shining that was home.

CHAPTER XXIII

IN May they heard that all the British soldiery and General Braddock and so many companies of colonials, north and south, and Colonel Washington had set out from Alexandria and were marching by Winchester and Fort Cumberland upon that Fort Du Quesne that the French had built, audaciously and usurpingly, on the Alleghany River. That river was described as in Augusta County, but far, far, far was it from Staunton in the Valley, from Burke's Tract and Burke's Land. As far as through almost the length of England, and no roads such as they had in England.

May went in a great flood of light and beauty though all these small farmers said there fell too little rain. June entered and the azalea, the laurel and the rhododendron bloomed. In these two months came stories of terrible Indian deeds against white men and women and children in the back woods, afar. Those settlers had built too near the Shawnees and their sixteen villages, too near, though many a league of forest stretched between. It was now seen that there were beginning general concerted pushes by small bands of Shawnees, Wyandots and others against all the long frontier. The white men themselves and their families, where they escaped the tomahawk, began painfully to retrace their way eastward, leaving their cabins, their corn patches, their foothold in the great wilderness. As yet the Valley and the western slopes above the Valley had no such affliction. But the eyes of the folk took on a different expression and their lips parted quickly and closed quickly. It was a summer of drouth. No rain fell, or too little to

serve the planted things. The streams shrank. There was too great light, a naked heat, a tension.

July came on, the first week, the second week. Every traveler who entered Burke's Land from Long Mountain or Wild Cat Mountain, or any other mountain that environed it, found himself treated as a herald. Whatever news there was, proclaim it! But there was no news, save of more and more Indian attacks in the farthest west. Indians; no news of the French, nor of General Braddock.

Sunday, the thirteenth of July, Mount Promise Church was filled. More than ever the people wished to draw together. John Selkirk preached from the words, "Before Abraham was I am." When he gave out the text there were those before him who thought, "Why doesn't he take something for times of trouble, like, 'The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want', or 'Why does thine anger smoke against the sheep of thy pasture'?"

But under the minister's words they grew more and more still. Overtension and haggardness departed.

Morning and afternoon church were over. The low sun gilded Mount Promise and the river and all Burke's Land. The near mountains stood round about in gold and emerald, the far mountains in a smoky sapphire. There was no wind and little song of birds; a great quiet. Folk went home, the cows were milked, supper was eaten. A world of fireflies sparkled that night, and the whippoorwills called Whippoorwill! Whippoorwill!

The next Saturday, at three in the afternoon, Matthew suddenly raised a cry, "Uncle Andrew! Here comes Uncle Andrew!" and raced from the garden patch where he and Wat Graeme were gathering beans. Elizabeth started up from her spinning. The little Andrew played on the floor at her feet. As she ran to the door the three-months-old babe in the cradle — Conan, they called him — set up a cry.

She turned and took him, and Andrew scrambled to his feet and followed her.

Andrew Selkirk was coming up the hill on a spent horse. Even before he got to the great walnut tree and the porch she knew that he bore bad news, knew that he had left Burke's Tract by dawn and had ridden without pause over Long Mountain, because he would trust no other than himself so to urge and represent matters that his own would lift at once from this west and return into Burke's Tract, where were greater numbers and at least, for a breathing space, security; knew that he would not be able to budge her father, nor for the matter of that, Conan; knew that peace was over and war was here. Something stiffened in her; there occurred a movement as it were through every artery, and a slow thrill from nerve to nerve. The Past took charge. There stood with her children in the porch a Saxon, a Norman, a Celtic woman, a woman of the bronze and the stone age and of earlier ages than these. As the brother from the lower country checked his horse, Conan came from the wheat field.

"Ha, Andrew! — Well, what is it?" But he too knew, and he too was now a man of the past and at war.

General Braddock was defeated! It was too weak a word. Defeated, crushed, slain. His army overwhelmed, almost wiped out, only a remnant reeling back into settled British country. The news had been sent from Fort Cumberland to Winchester. From Winchester they had despatched a man at a gallop down the Valley Road. So it came to Staunton, and from Staunton ran on through Borden's Grant and to Burke's Tract and beyond, across the James, along the Southwest Trail; and east and west, Blue Ridge and Alleghany, were now hearing it.

Defeat had happened the ninth, — the ninth of July. The Regulars and the home companies had precisely

marched into a great, shallow pit. All the trees around and certain gullies concealed the French and their Indian allies. These fired and fired. The English were killed before they could pick out the foe. They fell and fell. It lasted three hours. Regulars from over the sea knew nothing of fighting like that, the yelling and whooping, and every tree of the forest turned into a foe. At last they broke. It was a rout, but they could not get away. The river afforded the only road. Many leaped in, but were drowned or shot swimming. The General had three horses killed under him, then he himself got a mortal wound. Almost all his officers were killed. The Virginia companies did well, better than the Regulars, but many and a many were dead. Colonel Washington lived, which was a mercy and a wonder. It was he, with Captain Stewart, who had brought off the dying General. Some companies had been left under Colonel Dunbar of the British at Little Meadows. The remnant from the woods and the river got at last back there, leaving perforce the guns and the wagons, the dead and the wounded and the prisoners. The dead and the wounded alike were scalped. They heard the cries and the devil shouts. The rider from Fort Cumberland had said that some of the captured were burned that night. It was a fearful defeat. Colonel Dunbar was drawing the remnant of the British regiments clean out of Virginia, back to Philadelphia. The French were crying, *Vive la guerre!* and every revengeful Indian tribe was loosed against the colonies.

Andrew, ending his relation, drew a heavy, broken breath and moistened his lips with his tongue. "There you are! I met at Carr's Mill a man with a horrid story of a massacre last week north of the Cowpasture. Trouble will be falling now anywhere! So I came." The beads were upon his brow. "Elizabeth, you must leave to-morrow. You've got your children, you ought to think of them, not of loyal-

ties to a piece of earth. And Father is just the kind, because he has never had a bad word to say for any Indian, to be the first victim! Put what gear you can on the horses, and we'll be over the mountain by dusk. I can't stay — everything's to be done at home — and I can't leave you, either. If I did, Father might yet think he had to stay in a sinking ship. I depend on you, Conan, to be reasonable. There's plenty of company. They're leaving the Greenbrier and the South West country. Folk just have to flee till better times. If you make the start, you and Father, the others here will follow you. It's your duty to them!"

Conan walked the length of the porch and returned. "We'll have to call them together, Andrew, all the Burke's Land men. Then if it's determined to abandon this region till better times, I'll hasten things just as much as I can. But I can't run away to-morrow, seeing that my father and I opened this land and brought the folk here."

"Father will not go unless all Mount Promise goes."

Andrew made a gesture of despair. "I know how it will be! Didn't I ride a way with Duncan McLeod from the foot of the mountain? He's like a badger. I told him so. 'You're for all the world like a badger, squat before your hole with the fire in front of you!' He's more than a badger. Badgers are just obstinate. He's a catamount, wanting to do the fighting! Highland fury! And Kennedy will back him with a difference. And there are others. It's the same everywhere. So many out of so many stick by their cabins. Then one night the Indians come and it is all over. They change their acres for death. I love my land," said Andrew. "But I am not mad."

"We have our fort, and we'll build another as quickly as we can. The Last Leap people must come in at once."

Andrew struck his hands together. "I see that you will not leave"

"I cannot, Andrew, unless the others go too. It's Burke's Land. The last Burke has a feeling that he cannot."

"Then Elizabeth and the children must come with me, Conan."

"No, no!" said Elizabeth. "Not I, Andrew. But, Conan, should the children go?"

She strained the babe to her breast as she spoke, and with her other hand drew to her Andrew, who was fretful this hot and dry summer and would not have her budge from his neighborhood. The babe too ailed. Matthew and John and Eileen and Andrew and Conan. Matthew, who was by, set up a shout, "Oh, Father, I don't want to go! Oh, Mother, don't make me!"

"You would take them, Andrew?"

"Yes, of course."

"I don't know; I don't know!" said Conan. "How could they leave us? How could we let them go? And you—what assurance is there that the war won't reach Burke's Tract?"

"There isn't any. But it must break east through the west. This range of country, north to south, will get it first and worst. We'll have a breathing and rallying space. Just as the whole Valley will prove stockade and dyke for everybody east of Blue Ridge. I'll take care of your children," said Andrew, "as I will of my own."

"We know that. But we do not know that it's safety and haven. We cannot know that. We'll keep them," said Conan. "We have the fort."

Andrew leaned against the trimmed locust that made the pillar of the porch. "I've had my coming for nothing! I see that Aunt Kirstie and Robin will stay with the old man. He'll stay where he is.—Well, Tam and Nancy and Phemie and I will have our own trouble and dread, and doubled by knowing you in the mouth of the lion!"

"You are so good, Andrew! Come in, and take some food."

"Aye, do," said Conan. "Then you shall have Bonny Lass and we'll ride to see the minister and the others."

Andrew slept that night at his father's house. Conan, returning at dusk, found Elizabeth awaiting him at the stile. He dismounted from Tyrone, and the husband and wife sat side by side. He put his arm around her and drew her to him. "The McLeods and Jardines and Kennedys and others won't go. The Moores and Smiths and Macgregors will. But more than half of Burke's Land put their foot down to stay, daring the Indian! We'll meet Thursday to see about strengthening the fort and providing garrison. We'll apply to Staunton for ammunition, powder and lead. Andrew says that Governor Dinwiddie promises to be very active. He's trying now with big promises and gifts to engage the Cherokees, Catawbas and Tuscaroras against the Shawnees. It's the Shawnees and their helpers that will be our foes. Colonel Washington is at Winchester. He'll certainly end in being the leader in Virginia. James Patton and Andrew Lewis are apt to grow tall. Every one sees that it's going to be mortally hard to form companies in these parts for any general service, seeing that the men will have to be drawn from their own doors and little forts. — Robin says he is going to enlist. Aunt Kirstie and your father had better come here — if he will!"

She loosed her hands from his and covered her face. "Oh, how mournfully that whippoorwill is crying! And it's as though there were huge giants stalking in this shadowy valley! Don't you see them, Conan, dim and moving?"

"I wish the heat and the drouth would break," said Conan. "Everybody and everything seems to me *fey*. Coming up the road just now I seemed to hear beating a

thousand little drums. I said to myself, 'It's our past! It's our past!'"

The last amber and ruby light died from the earth. The sky held color a little longer, then that was gone. A myriad, myriad insect voices shrilled in the parched warmth; in battalions the fireflies burst forth, Venus burned in the west, the herded mountains stood ebony.

"General Braddock and his men lying dead," said Elizabeth. "Oh, me, the trouble of the country!"

Night stole upon their world; the stars shone forth. Conan stood up. "Come, dear, my dear! We'll gather all our folk and speak to them, then say our prayers and go to rest. God reigns and will reign! That sounds above the drums."

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CHAPTER XXIV

THE minister of Mount Promise Church beat out the last point of burning leaves and twigs in the fence angle. Tom Kennedy attended to the running serpent of flame upon the ravine side and William Watts and Jim Flannagan to a rising smoke back among the pine needles. "Who would have thought," chirped Watts, "that a bresh burning would ha' gotten away like that and threatened the church?"

The four men surveyed the blackened earth where the carpet of last year's leaves had been licked away, and beat the signs of their toil from their hands. "Better wash them in the stream," said the minister, "unless you'll come on to the manse?"

They could not do that. Two were ploughing, and Tom Kennedy felling a tree. But they all stepped down to the babbling run, swollen by melting snows and early spring rains, and kneeling, washed their brawny hands and arms. The three who had joined the minister at his shout had brought their guns with them. Nowadays men ploughed or felled or builded or went about any business with their muskets along. They rested these against a log while they bent over the water. Above them and the stream the over-arching maples were tipped with fiery bloom; on the other side of Promise Run, out of the tawny, dead-leaf carpet untouched by the incipient mountain fire, sprang a fairy sowing of bloodroot and violets. A smoky blue sky domed itself above the leafless forest that yet exhibited a smoky, soft, purplish fullness of swollen buds. Everywhere arose a soft stir and twitter, a flutter of returning wings. Tom

Kennedy wiped his hands upon the skirt of his linsey hunting frock. He was humming.

Fire in the mountains!

Run, boy, run!

"If they'd seen it from Long Mountain, to-night, they'd have thought the redskins were here at last."

Jim Flannagan put on a bodeful air. "I don't like these melting snows over there on the great mountains. They can put forth now, the devils, from their devil towns.—I beg the minister's pardon!"

"We've been surely sealed away, as it were, and I hope it will last!" said William Watts. "We took no harm last fall while wailings were going up from this, that, and 'tother region. Then comes the hard winter when in nature they don't take the warpath, seeing it may be hid under three feet of snow. And now for a month they might have come sneaking this way and they haven't. I say the Lord is with us!"

They straightened from the stream and took up the guns.

"Well, we've saved the church," quoth Jim Flannagan seriously, "and that's a good morning's work!"

"The minister might mention it next Sunday."

John Selkirk laughed. "Very good! I will."

"It's my opinion," said William Watts, "that all the folk who scurried out of Burke's Land like partridges, leaving their cabins for the critturs and the ghosts, may be sorrowing now that they did so. Clearing away and leaving all that they'd built up! I'd 'a' been ashamed—and nothing happening after all!"

"It ain't too late let," said Tom Kennedy.

Fire in the mountains!

Run, girl, run!

Jim Flannagan and William Watts returned to their ploughing and Tom Kennedy to clearing trees out of the road. The minister was going to Jake Gurdy's under Wild Cat. There was no sickness or trouble, but he visited every family in Burke's Land. Since last summer there were not so many.

Before resuming his journey, he seated himself upon the log by the stream to rest a little from the exertion caused by the fire that had been sowed by Watts' carelessness in brush burning. There had been a good deal of exertion. He had been from youth a strong man and he was one still. But his years were three score and seven.

They did not seem so many as he sat there in the thin, fine, third-month sunshine, over him the red maple, beside him the rushing water, and springing from the pale brown earth bloodroot and violets. Before him, seen through the branches, rose the church, brown log under brown trees. He regarded it with love—it was the fourth church he had had in his life—the one before Thistlebrae, Thistlebrae, Mount Olivet and Mount Promise. It seemed to him to have a light around it, a sunshine in the sunshine. The sense of all those who gathered there, week after week, came about him, of their needs and wishes, hopes and fears, joys and sorrows, defeats and victories. There was more victory than defeat,—spiritual victory. It came across him like a waft of music, not strong yet, all faint, but music. Real victory despite all defeat, blooming beside bitter defeat, sustaining itself, finding its food and strengthening. Mount Promise Church and Burke's Land and Virginia and Scotland and the whole world.—Squirrels ran from bough to bough of the budding trees, a butterfly crossed a patch of violets; he seemed to hear the wild bees. It was so lovely that he would have liked to sit here through the morning, now in meditation and now just resting with the

sunshine, but presently he resolutely stood up, a tall, gaunt man, gray of head and beard but possessed of more physical strength than many a younger person. As for walking to Wild Cat, it was nothing. He had been a great walker all his life, though the spring made him lazy this morning and reluctant to stir. He looked around him once more, then put himself into motion. His Bible was in his pocket and he took his staff from where he had leaned it against a beech. He did not carry a gun.

Half a mile from Mount Promise Church he met the elder Kennedy. "Morning, sir!"

"Good morning, James! It's a lovely day."

"Aye, 'tis that. All kinds of things are stirring. I've been to the fort."

"Have you? I saw Tom a while ago. He said that you and he would take week and week about in garrison."

"Aye, one at home with the women and the work, one in fort. We've got it all fixed now, just as it was before the winter let us all go home. Ten men steady in the fort, and three scouting parties of two each to keep looking out for all things suspicious. We've established a set of signals, and we'll get the fort provisioned this week."

"Was Conan there this morning?"

"Yes. — Robin's gone to join Major Andrew Lewis?"

"Yes. It's thought there'll be an expedition against the Shawnee towns."

"'Tis thought!" said Kennedy in his soft, drawling voice. "They'll never get the thousand and more than a thousand they'll need for that! As for Cherokees and Catawbias, they'll give plenty of helpful *words* that when you lean on them will be found to be shadows! And from their point of view why should they help us, that's what I'm asking? They're Indians. They're enemies of the Shawnees, but Shawnees aren't nothing like so dangerous

to them in the end as white men. So I don't myself expect that expedition to come to much. But it's certain, wherever he is, that Robin will give a good account of himself. As for Andrew Lewis, he's the best man for these purposes that we've got in Augusta County, now that James Patton is slain. There's been a horrid affair on the South Branch. Had you heard about it, sir?"

"No."

"Eight killed and five women and children carried off. But a part of the Indians got their come-uppance. Their band divided and the half with the captives got away, worse luck! The other part was come up with by Captain MacNeil's company of rangers and shot and scalped to a man."

"Scalped?"

Kennedy's soft, reasonable voice remained soft and reasonable. "We've got to pay in kind—you can't keep our men from doing it. We've got the Old Testament for it, sir."

"But not the New."

"We're not yet burning Indians at the stake," pursued Kennedy. "But of course I'm not saying that we sha'n't before our war's over. They've got the advantage, though, in that they're trained not to mind! Eye for an eye and tooth for a tooth, sir."

"But not the New."

"It's lovely weather," said Kennedy. "Sweet and peaceful like. It does seem that we have been kind of sheltered. But you ought to take your gun with you, sir, now that the winter's over." With which he shifted his own to the hollow of his arm and said good day.

The minister resumed his journey, Wild Cat Mountain enlarging now before him and his path beginning to climb. The Gurdys lived upon a spur; he could see the red, steep ploughed field behind the cabin. Presently he reached a

point of rock with a wide view which he loved and with which he always lingered a little when he came this way. Now he leaned against the fissured limestone mantled with lichen and small ferns and looked forth upon the purple cup of Burke's Land. It lay in an oval, misty and sweet with spring light. Across from him, on the other side of the vale, under the wall of Long Mountain, he made out the fort — stockade, blockhouse and cabins. It had a bit of a flag flying from a pole, the trees for some rods around had been cut down, and paths ran in from this, that, and the other direction. His eyes left the fort. He saw Mount Promise Church and his own house and Kirstie's school. There ran the river, there stood the mill and there the smithy. Thinly scattered in a forest world, by water, on hillsides, brown among leafless trees, he saw, if not with his bodily eye then with the eye of knowledge, the houses of the dwellers in Burke's Land. There was Conan and Elizabeth's. He blessed it, he blessed them all, then turning from the great view dipped into pine shade.

The three Gurdy women welcomed him. The men were away, one at the fort, drawn for the garrison, the other two planting corn. A gun leaned against the wall by the door and a hound slept in the sun. The place stood well up on the spur and looked out upon a gulf of air, a floor of forest, and the Last Leap region.

They gave him buttermilk to drink and garnered the news. He gave them all that they could take and then questioned in his turn. How was Jake's leg? Was Azariah among the men told off for scouting? Robin had always said that no one in Burke's Land knew the woods and their signs as Azariah knew them.

"That's just what Azariah says of him. Yes, he's to go out with Abram Weatherly, two days running, and spy out if there's any Indian creeping like a snake, and use his gun

if it's needed. — Maybe so he kin git a chance to shoot Will Berry unbeknownst!"

The other two laughed, then one cried, "Melinda, you hadn't ought to say things like that before the minister!"

"Best say them out if she thinks them," answered John Selkirk. "Why do you think them, Mrs. Gurdy?"

"My Lord, sir, why do I think them? I think them because the Berrys done us injury. If you kin tell me how I'm to help it — not that I'm especially wanting to help it! It's something to *do*!"

The old minister looked at her. "You so need something to do? Can't you do nothing? But I suppose not — I suppose not!" The hound rose, stretched himself and came to his knee; wide-winged, a buzzard sailed overhead and out upon the depth of air; the sun-smitten earth and pine trees poured forth fragrance. "You'll learn, Melinda," said the old man. "One and all, by our littles, we learn. The Gurdys learn and the Berrys learn and the Selkirks learn." He patted the dog. "Watch wanted to come with me, old fellow, but I said, 'No, stay at home to-day.'"

His visit lasted an hour. Perhaps when he went the Gurdys thought better of the Berrys; perhaps not yet. The three women watched him down the rough path and under the trees. "He's going to the big patch after all to have a crack with Jake and Dick."

He went to the field that lay beyond the belt of trees, on the side of the spur that looked toward Last Leap and the wilderness. The path was a considerable one and sprawled over the shoulder. He did not find the men and looking for them on the far side and in the corners lost behind the slope the cabin and all view and sense of an inhabited Burke's Land. The men, he thought at last, must have passed without seeing or being seen, going home through the thick wood that skirted the field. They had not done

that but had descended the spur, having some small business with Timothy Burt who lived at the foot. The field lay lonely, turned toward the western mountains and the endless forest. John Selkirk made to retrace his steps, and then stood still, just to watch for a little the beauty of the world. A wave of unearthliness came over him. He forgot the Gurdys, he forgot Burke's Land, or rather he did not forget, but all came into relation or unison with a million, million other points and there spread before him something new. Something new, and yet something so fulfilling and so deeply dear! He had never been without experiences of this kind, they were his manna, his ambrosia. When they came, following their own law of intervals, he sat or stood very still, the lines of his face smoothing out, all his being washed by an invisible sea of awe and bliss. Now the rich and deep perception held for a few seconds, then ceased, leaving memory.

He had seated himself upon the gnarled root of an oak in the far corner of Gurdy's field. Now suddenly he heard the bleat of a lamb.

It seemed to come from an extension of the field, a ragged, stony, grassy bit of natural pasturage, running still farther down toward the deep woods of Last Leap. He turned his head and heard it again, a distressful sound. Standing up, he moved so that he might see that way, but he saw nothing. Extreme solitariness breathed around, above and below. The arm of Wild Cat now quite hid the Gurdys' cabin, and its long skirts shimmered down and afar to Last Leap River, flowing unseen in a silent, purple forest. He was looking away, quite away, from Burke's Land.

Something like a cool breath seemed to touch his cheek and crisp his hair. He felt it upon the backs of his hands and his heart changed its beat. Yet it was not alarm. Why

should he be alarmed? And indeed the peace and wealth of a few minutes before still rang and sang within him. The lamb cried again most pitifully. "He is lost and caught somehow in the thorns," thought the minister, and picking up his staff left the corner of the field for the steep, descending pasturage.

Here were thorn bushes, small trees, stone mullein, but no woolly thing in trouble. The sun shone upon the fine, slippery turf, clouds passing threw down motley shaped shadows, and a most poignant loneliness folded its wings and came here to rest. The lamb cried again. "It is from the wood down there," said John Selkirk. "I think I see it." But when he came to the edge of the wood it was a white stone that he had seen.

He stood still, then from the dimness before him, there being much hemlock and pine in this forest, came again the piteous bleat. "My lamb, I do not understand you!" he said, and stepped beneath the trees.

He had not gone far when something, he knew not what, bred a thought. He stopped short and his hand gripped hard his staff, then after a moment he turned and with a soundless step made to leave the forest for the pasturage, the field and the cabin. But the Indian marksman who had been drawing others that way with that cry was keen of eye and swift of foot and sure of aim. The minister reached the pasturage and began to climb it. Then the bullet from the rifle given by the Frenchman to the Indian reached his heart.

CHAPTER XXV

A WAVE of death and captivity struck thus the western front of Burke's Land. It broke upon the Last Leap country and the shoulder of Wild Cat Mountain. Then it retired, bearing spoils. The main Burke's Land stood as before.

A boy came breathless to the fort that afternoon. Something was wrong over on Gurdy's Shoulder. He had been hunting and had heard a shot, and then after a little screeches.

Six men went to see. They found the cabin wrecked and the three Gurdy women gone. The hound lay with his throat cut. In the field they came upon Jake and Dick Gurdy, lying dead and scalped. It was some time later that they found the minister, lying by a great stone in the sun-drenched pasturage.

Three families had declined to leave the Last Leap territory when, last summer, had begun the exodus from the backwoods. Now how had they fared? Two pencils of smoke, visible from Gurdy's Shoulder, floating above the forest, seemed to tell.

Twenty men of Burke's Land volunteered to go find out. They went, armed and cautious, and with them Azariah Gurdy, the reader of signs. They found two cabins in ashes, and all there dead or taken. But the third had in it three men, two women and a twelve-year-old boy with guns. In some way this household had taken alarm or received warning. It bristled like a porcupine, then, relieved, sat down and smiled a little foolishly at the Burke's Land men. "Aye, they came this way, the d—d lot of them,

with them scalps at their belts! But they seemed to have a notion they were being followed, so after they had hung around for an hour or two they made off, Davie there and his mother being so brash with their guns!"

"How many?"

"Ten against us. But we think there was another party with prisoners. We seemed to make out that the two joined at the ford yonder. — Did they get the Davises and the Borrowes?"

"Let's follow," said Azariah Gurdy to the Burke's Land men. "I kin pick up their trail the other side of any water. There's three women with them that air smart enough to mark it for us."

The body went to the ford and crossed it. But it took an hour to find on the farther side what Azariah swore to be the trail, and then it broke at a ledge of rock. The invaders had a long start. A dimness pervaded the forest, the close of day within halloo.

"It can't be done," said James Kennedy. "We can't find them. They're gone. We've got that comfort that Indians are as like to adopt women and children as they are to kill them. Aye, it's cold comfort, but life is sweet! Maybe in some way Fortune will bring some of them back. But now we'd better go home and look to our own!"

All of the score agreed but Azariah Gurdy. "I haven't got any own left to look to, and I'm going on. There is three Gurdy women on ahead somewhere. It's all right, you others! I know that them redskins know their way and take it, and travel light and quick, prisoners or no prisoners. I know that you can't catch up, and that there may be other war parties in these dismal, deep woods, and if they are they'll ambush you. Your houses and folks and the fort in Burke's Land air beckoning you this minute, and they air right. You're needed there. But I'm going on."

They could not dissuade him or detain him and he departed. Returning across Last Leap river to the cabin that had escaped they found here another piece of obstinacy. Its family meant, it appeared, to come up into Burke's Land for the funeral of those who had been slain. Mount Promise Church was Last Leap's church, and that graveyard its graveyard. The cabin's name was Doyle. The Doyles would not miss the funeral, the paying of respect and the excitement, nor the thrill there of their own thrilling story. But it was not their meaning to go at the moment, nor indeed until the day after to-morrow. And they had no intention of remaining in Burke's Land. They would return home.

"That's folly!" said Kennedy. "Don't you know that peace is over, and that they'll come again? Now that they've spied out the land there'll be more and greater parties. If there's any life left in this dale they'll stamp it out on their way to us. We'll be getting all our people into the cabins at our fort, and that's where you'll be coming too!"

But the Doyles remained obstinate. And there was no way to force them. Outside of certain traditional and legalized applications of community power, the man of the frontier was left quite largely and freely and generally to make his own choices and gang his own gait. The Doyles said that they would come up to Burke's Land the day after to-morrow and to tell Patsy Lane to look out for them. And now they'd help lay in the earth the slain Davises and Borrows.

In Burke's Land was excitement, alarm and mourning.

The bodies of the two Gurdys lay in their cabin with an ancient man and a boy to watch at the door. The body of the minister lay on his bed in the manse with white linen folded about his head. Elizabeth and Kirstie and Mother Dick watched. Conan was at the fort where the cabins

were filling as the people left their own houses and came in to the center. Ninian had been sent across Long Mountain to Burke's Tract and Andrew Selkirk. But it was only to take the news. His family did not look for Andrew here. Who knew where the Shawnees would be striking? Heads of families now must stay at home, leading men in their own communities.

Spring sunshine bathed the manse. The fruit trees that they had planted were in blossom.

The party that had been sent to Last Reap returned. Davises, Borrowes and Gurdys and John Selkirk, — sixteen were dead. Eight men, three women, five children. Four women, four children, had been carried away prisoners. The Doyles were safe but touched in the head. There had been but one thing to do and that was to lay the dead of Last Leap in the earth above the river. They had done that and made a cairn to mark the place. The Shawnees had re-crossed the river. That band at least would seem to be gone for this time. Azariah Gurdy had chosen to follow it, and no one had been able to prevent him. — Folk coming into the fort? Well, no doubt it was the wisest thing, but it surely was hard to leave things this-away in the spring time!

The redbird and the thrush and the mocking bird sang. A branch of the cherry tree stretched across the window, all white and fragrant and a haunt of bees. Coming by it, out of the blue sky, shafts of sunshine broke upon the floor. Traditionally, the window should have been darkened, but Elizabeth and Kirstie and Mother Dick set it and the door wide. Light and air entered by both.

"He looks noble and at rest," said Mother Dick.

Elizabeth wept. "Father — Father!"

With her long, thin hands upon violets in her lap, Kirstie sat and thought of Scotland. You might have said

that she was less here than over sea, in the youth of herself and Jean and the minister.

"I've worked it out for myself," said Mother Dick. "The last breath here's the first there. He had no need to be afraid to draw breath. No! He's breathing freely and easily in a happy land. Then don't ye cry, Elizabeth!"

"I won't cry long," said Elizabeth, "but I must cry now. Father — Father!"

Jean and Kirstie Mackay were sitting in the kirk and a young minister — young John Selkirk — had just come into the pulpit for his first sermon. The text was "Little children, love one another." They had written it down afterwards.

Spring in the Appalachian Mountains, in the primeval forest in this upland dale and frontier measure sang and shone. The water leaped and played, the sweet airs went softly by, brown earth and rock almost found voice, light fire danced through the whole. As for wild life, these were its carnival and its temple days. The stags and does, the bears, the foxes, the mountain cats, the gray wolves and wise beavers, the opossum and raccoon and all the lesser four-footed creatures, and the multitude of birds, and the serpents and the insects felt Spring. To the human beings in this region and this year it made a strange music.

Before they put in earth the bodies of the minister and the two Gurdys, Ninian was back from Burke's Tract where, following instructions, he had made no tarrying. Andrew Selkirk could not come to his father's funeral, for Burke's Tract had its own troubles and its men must stay with the living. Indians had come down the James — a large war party. They had struck the houses up the river in the night. Twelve were dead, — men, women and children. But Murchieson's Company of Rangers were there at the fort, and these met the Indians and there followed a

battle. The Shawnees were defeated and driven off. They fled back up the river, leaving a number of dead. But none knew when they would come again and more strongly. It was hard to hold the Rangers together when families were imperilled everywhere. The folk were drawing in to the Mount Olivet fort and they were going to build another five miles up the James. Andrew and Nancy sent their love and tears.

Standing under the cherry tree Conan told all this to Elizabeth, and then went again to his tasks. In the stress Leadership had come and taken his hand. Elizabeth turned back to the still, sunlighted room, and said to Kirstie and Mother Dick, "Andrew cannot come. A party of Shawnees with Cherokees helping broke into Burke's Tract and there has been a battle. Murchieson's Rangers beat them off. But twelve men and women and children are dead — the folk that lived above the cliffs. John and Esther Gelatly are dead."

The next day they buried the bodies, carrying down from Wild Cat Shoulder those of the Gurdys, and from the manse the minister's. A throng followed the biers into Mount Promise churchyard. The men had with them their guns, and no woman would leave a child at home. There being no minister, Conan met them, and at the graves Conan read the chapter, and Conan made the prayer. But Jardine the smith who had a beautiful voice raised the hymns. All followed.

When the last trumpet's awful voice this rending earth
shall shake,
When opening graves shall yield their charge, and dust to
life awake;
Those bodies that corrupted fell shall incorrupted rise,
And mortal forms shall spring to life immortal in the skies.

And again,

Take comfort, Christians, when your friends
in Jesus fall asleep.

So they buried John Selkirk and Jacob and Richard Gurdy — or the bodies of them — under the budding trees, beside the log church. The Doyles from Last Leap were there in the throng, but the Davises and Borrows, or their bodies, lay among the redbud and the dogwood and the pine above Last Leap River.

CHAPTER XXVI

GREAT BRITAIN and Prussia combined, and Austria, Russia and France. The Seven Years' War started its headlong career. William Pitt became Secretary of State, and Frederick of Prussia Frederick the Great.

In America Montcalm manoeuvred and defended in Canada, held Ticonderoga on Lake Champlain and many small forts in the Ohio country, and gained the Indian Alliance. The British Colonies, north and south, raised twenty thousand men to aid the British troops that were coming overseas. The seaboard was the populous country and the safe country, but the vast, slow-mounting slope of the back country must be warded from danger, and the very back, the mountains and headwaters, the frontier and pioneer land, saved, it might be, from the scourge of war. But it was so vast, and the conditions were so difficult!

Robert Dinwiddie, Deputy-Governor of Virginia, wrote and scolded and hasted here and there. He was ardent, intensely in earnest, and not without ability. The Assembly, sitting in Williamsburgh, voted and voted,—voted supplies, voted moneys, voted troops. Troops were raised, and some of them stayed so.

In the perilous western country appeared a chain of blockhouses, running from the Potomac, behind Winchester, through the vales and passes of the Alleghanies, as far south as the Roanoke. Fort Loudon at Winchester formed a real stronghold, with a garrison of four hundred men. Fort Cumberland on the Potomac likewise had strength, and later another Loudon on the Tennessee River. But the others were primitive places of defense, built hastily by

the men of the region around, and all were leagues apart.

And out of the western country still poured the settlers, abandoning homesteads, cleared and planted land, and hopes that had been high. They pressed out of the Alleghanies into the Great Valley. But the Great Valley, neither, was safe, and moreover the lands there were taken up. Numbers crossed the Blue Ridge, back into much older Virginia that need hardly fear invasion, French or Indian. But older Virginia gave them no holdings of their own. There remained the southern road, out of Virginia into North Carolina. Here were mountains and fair valleys with rivers, and a small, small population. Here lands might be had, some from proprietors on easy terms, and some for merely building a cabin and making a rough clearing and declaring "This is mine!" True they neighbored Indians, but these were Southern Indians, hereditary foes of Northern Indians, far removed from the Ohio country and the song of the French Serpent. They even professed to be some sort of allies of the British; though their help came to little indeed. The most of the settlers leaving the endangered land took the road to North Carolina. For long it was a familiar sight—covered wagons with pack horses and cattle following making slow way out of the Great Valley and out of Virginia. Women and children rode or sometimes walked; the men carried guns, the dogs ran beside. Many who passed had tales to tell. They had not left their homes until red death had grinned at them there. Sometimes a whole neighborhood would be removing together. Others went while the alarm was still afar. At last Virginia west of the Blue Ridge seemed to have stepped back in population many years. No new settlers came in. All wide and long plans halted. A guerilla war set up its banner and renewed it year by year.

The people who stayed grew hardened. They seemed to

step back into an earlier age. All handled gun and knife and hatchet. They got powder and lead from Winchester and Staunton and from the traders who brought it into the hills on pack horses. They ran bullets, the grindstones turned and kept sharp their edged weapons. When they prepared the earth, planted and harvested, they did so with a watch set, and each man with his gun at hand. In the spring, summer and autumn they lived, many of them, in the rude cabins built between the angles of the stockade that ran around a central blockhouse. From these cabins men went in small parties to the fields or to look after stock, or to see if their old dwelling houses were still standing, or on this errand or on that. If a man or if two men went alone, he or they went warily. Now and then women alone might be met, on the road or on some forest path, but this was seldom. All things were simplified. It was not easy to get goods, so articles were made to last, and when they were outworn, broken or vanished they were not replaced. Pretty generally the men wore the hunting shirt, and the moccasin was universal. The roads were not mended or new roads cleared, and no new houses went up. So many old ones stood vacant. Because all harvests were scant and precarious, the trapper and the hunter became again the country's stand-by.

It was very irksome staying, months on end, crowded in the forts. Some families, after the first trial, would only come in again upon an actual alarm. They stayed at home, listening and peering. Others moved restlessly back and forth, having some divining system of their own as to seasons of danger. Others clung, first and last, to the shelter of the stockade. It proved a strange hit-and-miss war. Some dwelt throughout in safety, miles away from any. Others who thought they had made all secure would be taken unawares, at some crevice.

In the winter all went back to their homes. The first snow cried, "I have blocked the warpaths till spring!" After that winter hardship, but winter safety. Then spring again, and softness, warmth, beauty and peril. It was a long war, long in Europe and long in America.

The French and British met in Canada and the back country of New York or of Pennsylvania, but not in the great Colonies to the south. It was the Shawnees and allied tribes who ravaged that Virginia which gave to the west and included the headwaters of rivers that went to the Ohio, the Missouri and the Mississippi. The French armed the Shawnees, the Delawares, the Mingoës, the Wyandots and Chippewas and others, and gave every fiery word and honied promise, but only now and then were Frenchmen found in the war bands. All these Indians together numbered only a few thousands; the Shawnees, the deadliest, could never have drawn out of their sixteen villages more than seven hundred braves. But each was an adept at forest war, merciless and tireless, and on fire with the notion that the Alleghanies and the Valley might be won again for red men. For enemy they had before them a folk thinly scattered over a great extent of country; brave enough, as brave as themselves, but in much at a disadvantage.

How terrible were the death and captivity stories that echoed among the mountains or ran from dale to dale! How fantastic and at times humorous the tales of escape! At first the people lived with an edged and hair-trigger mood, but at last grew used and made no more ado than had done their forefathers. Life adjusted itself, stepping back to a plane of primitive war in a primitive country. Pretty generally the young men scalped the Indians that they slew. They took no Indian prisoners.

Very early in the war Colonel James Patton rode on

recruiting business into the far country on New River. Here, in the Draper's Meadows settlement, he stopped in the house of John Draper. It was a hot summer day. He sat at a table writing, a tall and powerful man, his sword lying beside him. Suddenly arose a woman's scream, "Indians! Indians!" John Draper's wife ran into the room, snatched her infant from its cradle and vanished through the door at the back. Patton sprang up with his sword. There were shots and screams. He rushed from the room and met at the house door four or five Indians. With his broadsword he felled two, but the others shot him down and tomahawked him. Draper, William Ingles and several at work in the fields escaped. Other men were not so fortunate. Mrs. Draper, who had given the alarm, fled with her child from the back of the house, but an Indian saw her, fired and broke her right arm. The child fell to the ground. She snatched it up and ran on, but was presently overtaken and made captive. The child's head was dashed against a log. Other prisoners were Mrs. Ingles and her two children and a man named Lenard. After plundering the place, the Indians set fire to the house and departed, carrying these captives. Of the adventures of these two women, Mrs. Draper and Mrs. Ingles, and especially of the last, a volume might be made.

Late in 1755, Vass' Fort on the Roanoke was attacked and entered, and all who had taken refuge there slain or carried off captive.

In February of this year Andrew Lewis and a considerable body of rangers departed upon an expedition against the Shawnees upon the Big Sandy. All the country was difficult and unknown, and winter reigning in the endless forest. Crossing a river, canoes were upset and the provisions they were carrying lost. After this they met elk and buffalo and for a time feasted. Then no more of these

appeared, and later all game seemed to have gone from the earth. All was iron, gray and frozen. Starvation began to threaten. Horses died. This around was the ultimate wilderness. Men deserted. There were no Indians, but only the dead forest. An intense cold came about them and a lack of food. At last Lewis ordered a return. Several perished in the fortnight that passed before they reached the outermost English settlement. The hot-tempered Governor scolded, but immediately reemployed Andrew Lewis, and he built Fort Loudon on the Tennessee.

Fifty Shawnees, led by a Frenchman, came over the Alleghanies behind the Capon River, divided, as was their wont, unless their objective was a fort, into several bands, and committed every kind of barbarity. Jeremiah Smith and twenty men went out against them, and meeting them at a point where they were reunited there ensued a bitter fight. The Frenchman and many Shawnees fell; at last all gave way, streaming off westward through the dark forest.

Cartmill Gap and Purgatory Creek were by the James. Here stood log houses of Denis and Renick and Smith, and here another band surprised these families, broke their defences, tomahawked and scalped the men and carried away the women and the children who were of an age to travel. Three young men were riding toward Smith's house when they heard the firing and whooping. They wheeled and made away, being too few to do any good there. Indians fired after them, wounding Audley Maxwell and shearing away George Matthews' queue. The latter gathered all the men he could from this region and together they pursued the Shawnees. As was the latter's custom they divided their force, one division moving swiftly westward with captives and plunder, while the other with enormous skill drew pursuit another way. Matthews and his force encountered

this delaying body in a rainy night. Nine Indians were killed and three or four white men. The rest of the Shawnees got away. Of the captives carried to the Ohio some died, others lived and several after years returned home. The boy, Joshua Renick, grew up in an Indian village and ended his days as a chief of the Miamis.

There was much trouble upon the Wappotomaka, the south branch of the Potomac. A large band of Shawnees under a famous chief came over the mountains into this wide and pleasant vale and wrought havoc. Upon their first entry they took prisoners Mrs. Brake and Mrs. Neff. The first proving unable to travel, they tomahawked and scalped her, but Mrs. Neff they carried with them as with great stealthiness they moved down the river upon Fort Pleasant where most of the people had taken refuge. In the night time Mrs. Neff, finding that the Indian guarding her was asleep, stole aside, made off through the woods and the darkness, got to the Fort and gave the alarm. At dawn a considerable party of the white men left the stockade, and following her direction came with all silentness to a spot whence they could see the Indian encampment in the deepest glen of that region. Here they made of their one company two, intending to take the Shawnees in a vise. But just then, when they were separated and not yet in position, a dog that unawares had followed his master from the fort must start up a rabbit and go tearing, yelping, along the side of the gorge, giving the Indians all necessary warning. These sprang up, seizing their guns, scattering in their fashion like eagles, each to his prey. There followed, in the narrowest of defiles between mountain face and swollen river, a bloody battle. The whites were strong men, used to firearms and to mountain sides. They fought desperately, but they were much outnumbered, and the Shawnees, under this chief, did each like a dark Mars.

Many fell. But half the white men were killed outright, others overpowered, made prisoner and afterwards slain. The remnant leaping into the swift river, as by miracle got away.

In the Valley, between Staunton and Winchester, two families in one wagon were hurrying upon an alarm to the nearest fort. As they forded a stream the laurels on the bank moved and yelled and five Indians dashed themselves against the wagon. The two men they overpowered and tomahawked before they could reach their guns, then turned upon the women. But these — Mrs. Sheets and Mrs. Taylor they were — had seized each an ax and standing in the wagon over their children fought like tigresses. They were strong, pioneer women, maddened by the sight of their dead and the danger to themselves and their brood. An Indian was dragging a child from the wagon. The mother seized it with one arm while with the other she brought her ax down upon the red crown. Others of the Indians had their wounds; they seemed to hear some sound of warning in the distance, ceased from the attack and plunged again into the laurels. The women brought the children and the two dead men into the fort.

A family named Brewbecker lived in the Valley close to the Massanutten range. On a summer evening about twilight, the men in from their work, and the whippoorwills and fireflies beginning, Mrs. Brewbecker suddenly broke into an outcry about Indians coming against them in the morning and that they must all get ready and leave the house. "What are you dreaming about?" said the men. "Who's telling you any such thing?" She said that she saw Indians there on a spur of the mountain, and that they would be here — here, she told them! — to-morrow. She made them come to the open door, and pointed with her finger. "There! There they are." The indicated spur

rose a couple of miles away; nothing in the world could be seen but a dark crest against a pale sky where one or two stars were brightening. The men broke into rough laughter with a note of concern in it. "Are you losing your senses?"

She persisted. "They've made a fire. They're cooking supper. I can count them. There are fifteen. We mustn't stay here! If we do we'll all be killed!"

All that night she insisted that she had seen what she had seen. The next day the men were still arguing when a man on a horse came tearing that way. The Brewbeckers escaped just in time. When the raid was over and the Indians gone, the curious in the matter found that they had indeed made their camp that night upon the spur.

Edwards' Fort stood upon the Capon River. A body of Shawnees did great harm hereabouts, and a company from the fort came out against them. It was their aim often to bring this about, for they were past masters at deceitful trails and ambushments. Among other buildings they had burned a mill, killing the two men whom they found there. Now apparently the whole force of them decamped. Captain Mercer with forty men followed a trail aimed direct at the high mountains. In several places they came upon meal dropped from one of the mill sacks. It seemed that the Shawnees had been in a hurry. The forty entered a ravine, cliffs and a stream. They did not go unwarily, but had sent two ahead, who found meal at the other end of the pass with other marks of Indians still in retreat. Mercer and his men marched along. But the Shawnees had doubled upon their steps by way of the water, and were hidden behind a long natural embankment of earth and rock. Without any warning this blazed death. Sixteen white men fell by this volley. When the merciless fight that followed was over, many Indians, it is true, were

dead. But out of the forty from Fort Edwards only six got back to that shelter.

All this is but a handful. A great number of terrible things happened.

There were Indian bands that returned no more to their brown, acclaiming villages where, under great trees, speech was made of a land that had been the red man's while Time was and was now to become the red man's again.

All manner of things happened that could happen in guerrilla and savage warfare. Children carried west grew up in Indian villages and became Indian, marrying, and at times leading the red men in affairs.

CHAPTER XXVII

BUT as for Burke's Land, the second summer of the war—the summer of 1756—seemed its time of trial, and after that it and Disaster to grow much less acquainted. When the Last Leap and Wild Cat Shoulder tragedy was two months old a great war party of Shawnees and Chickasaws, one of the largest that had crossed the high mountains, burst into this region. Apparently it was their intention, when they had wiped out Burke's Land, to cross Long Mountain and descend upon Burke's Tract. Thus the first became, so to speak, outer defences for the latter.

Robin Selkirk, home for a few weeks from his rangers' company, was the one to bring warning to Fort Kennedy. He had been hunting and had made out the small, small danger signals. Half the folk and more were already dwelling at the fort. Those yet in their own houses were warned in time. Even the Doyles got in from Last Leap.

Conan Burke, James Kennedy, Duncan McLeod—something came up in them of ancient, military genius. And there was no better scout than Robin. They were not taken by surprise, and other causes may have worked for them. This time it was the white men who provided the ambuscade. It succeeded beyond their highest hopes. Few, few of those Indians ever again saw the bright Ohio, and Burke's Land had little loss. Below them, over Long Mountain, Burke's Tract owed its safety to this fight and said so. "They're good men, up in Burke's Land!"

The autumn after this great affair stole by tranquilly, save for the burning of the heart over the terrible tales from

elsewhere. In November snow fell. Winter gave everywhere surcease of terror. Then here again shone warm and lovely spring. The cherry tree bloomed at the window of the manse as it had bloomed when there lay the body of John Selkirk. But now began, brought upon the wind from every quarter, the terrible stories.

There were two opinions in Burke's Land. One was that the redskins had learned their lesson and would not again attempt this region. The other held that being, as everybody knew, revengeful as Satan, they would come again as soon as they might.

The dogwood bloomed, the wild grape, the laurel. Corn was planted, corn came up, corn blades grew long and green. Fort Kennedy watched, the men who went out to work watched, women and children watched. One would say that the household dogs, that maybe the horse at the plough, or the horse going to mill, or the horse taking some rider over the mountain, watched. But the spring passed into the beauty of June and June into the strength and glory of July and August, and still Burke's Land was safe. So many other divisions of the Alleghanies and the Valley were not! Judgment that the redskins had had all they wanted here gained ground. It was comfortless living at the fort, and things at home going to rack and ruin! The folk pined to be under their own roofs, in the midst of their own order and rude plenty, with their own fields sloping from them. By later August there was really only the garrison at the fort, and no great garrison either. Men could not be kept with their own tasks needing them, and their folks now at home. The war was interminable; folk could not be eternally cooped up like so many fowl! Keep a good watch and take the risks! That was the way folk had to do in any land at war. Besides, the Shawnees had had enough here. That battle had resounded.

So they went home, the Burkes among the others. They would return to the fort upon the first alarm. And truly, from the tales of the past two years, the forts were not always the shields they were meant to be! September went by in peace, October decked in gold and crimson went by. Their harvests were gathered, their corn and wheat were ground, their folds and pens strengthened, their wood chopped for burning, their candles made, their wool and flax ready for the wheel and the loom, what stores they could bring over the mountains from Staunton brought. November came in a purple mantle. The second week snow fell, and after that tension relaxed, though from habit a man still took his gun whenever he went a hundred yards from the door.

Winter was not without its jollity. When the snow dwindled and for some days at a time the brown earth showed, or when the snow was frozen so that there was easy walking atop, drifts and all, neighbors exchanged visits. In the warm log houses, with the great blazing fire, all sat around and talked while the women brought ale of their own brewing or something stronger, and the children listened from the corners. They had little news in winter from the outer world, so they made the old news do, and turned it up and down and right and left and inside out. There was always, moreover, the local news. When the neighbors were gone, still stayed the warm house and the good fire and ones' selves, with enough to eat and drink and all the interesting inside work, the manufacturing in little, that went on in winter. Each household made a little world in itself. Rarely were the families small. There would be the heads of the house, the man and the woman, and their children, little or fairly grown or both. Then came the kindred almost always with them, and then, with the grander sort, the men-servants and the maid-servants. Here

distinctions showed, and yet all might sit and work and talk together, before the great fireplace, in the log house, in the wintry, Virginian mountains.

Church, too; they went to church unless some great snow-storm and the Sabbath met in time. Burke's Land had now for minister a young and tremendously earnest young man from Winchester, New Jersey and Edinburgh. He had been in Staunton when he heard of the slaying of the old minister, and he said to himself, "Hard and dangerous and in the mountains. I will go to that place!" So he went and preached to Burke's Land, and they called him. Now he and his young wife dwelt in the manse, and Kirstie and Robin lived with Conan and Elizabeth.

Winter went by all so peacefully, though to town folk the conditions might seem hard. The snows melted, the streams roared, the maples budded red, the birds returned—here was spring and Indian danger! They repaired the fort, and on a Sunday notice was given that the cabins there were clean and dry, and families might move in. So and so and so would make this month's garrison. But this year there was no great response in the way of placing households behind the stockade. Folk were tired of that—and the Shawnees were not going to attempt Burke's Land. Keep the fort strong and the scouts out, and for the rest go about one's business, though always with great precaution. The inclination towards this procedure proved general and irresistible. Burke's Land heard that other neighborhoods—even those that had not triumphantly repelled former invasions—were doing the same thing. When wars lasted as this was lasting, all the folk, men and women and young boys and girls, turned warrior, and all houses, big and little, became fortresses. That was the way of the forefathers.

So the Burkes with the others this year stayed at home.

They had a great household now, with Kirstie and Robin added, with the growing children, with Mother Dick and Annie and Barb all under one roof, and Will and Martha Wright, Walter and Wat Graeme, Ninian, Anthony and David in the two cabins, but often enough, for work and needs, in the "great house." The cabins stood close within the stockade-like fence that Conan had built around the whole. Because of the crowding, he and his men had added, the past November, a great room and two small rooms to the house. Now in all Burke's Land it stood the most spacious mansion, and one not easily to be attempted by any small band of foes; a refuge moreover, in time of need, for two or three families dwelling beyond it in a hollow of the hills.

The fruit trees bloomed. Upon the slopes the men were ploughing. The rich-colored earth, the cleared spaces, the log buildings were but as islets in the far-extending sea. There they were, but around and forever spread the waves of purplish-gray and the waves of green, the forest yet leafless and the evergreen forest. From Long Mountain it might well be seen how faint yet was the trace of the white man in the Highlands back of the Great Valley.

"It's very possible that in another twenty years there'll be smooth forest again over all. Or maybe one may see Indian villages. Or French ones."

The speaker, who was Thomas Selkirk, touched his horse and with his fellow traveler left the mountain top. "Aye, the Lord knows!" answered Stephen Trabue, the old trader. "But if we could really see up His road, we might find surprises!"

The two, well mounted by Andrew in Burke's Tract, well armed and with their wits about them, journeyed down the steep and narrow, stony and weather-rutted way. "Nothing public, no general work, is done," said Tam. "That's

noticeable just as soon as you touch Blue Ridge. War puts an end to it. Except, of course, small fort building and getting powder and ammunition about, and somehow supporting what companies we can raise and the Regulars the Crown sends us. Look at this road now! And all are as bad, once you leave Burke's Fort."

That name seemed to ring a bell for Trabue. "They had two bear cubs there when you all came from the east. They belonged to the Negro who was cooking. There's nothing that will make you laugh like bear cubs."

"That's true. I had forgot but now I see them plain enough! It's a long time and it's a short time, Mr. Trabue, since that day, and your covered wagon, and my dear, good father walking beside!"

By now they were not far from the bottom of the mountain. "There's some one coming up the road," said Trabue. "A white man on a horse."

The horseman below them stopped. Trabue called down, "From Burke's Tract!" and presently a turn brought the three in view of one another, though yet with a spiral of the way between. "It's Conan!" cried Tam. "Hillo, Conan!"

"Hillo, hillo, Tam! Mr. Trabue, is that you?"

They came together. The brothers-in-law had not seen each other since before the war began, and the war was now nearly four years old.

"How did you get here, Tam?"

"I got hungry to see you all, Conan. I thought, 'What's the use in they being the only ones to take a risk?' So here I am for a week or so! I found Mr. Trabue at Burke's Fort, and we traveled after that together. We've seen Andrew and Nancy and Phemie, and now it's your turn. How are you all?"

Conan laughed. "Why, well! The Shawnees and the

Frenchmen haven't us yet. We think they don't like the taste of us! Wow! Tam and Mr. Trabue, I'm glad to see you! I rode this way just to spy the land, but did not dream of spying you!"

He had swung himself down from his horse and now stood with his arm upon Tam's. He wore a fringed hunting shirt of blue linsey, the skirt reaching almost to the knee, the belt a handsome one of leather. Moccasins and leggings, too, were well made. He had a knife in a sheath and a long-barrelled musket, and on his dark hair gathered into a ribbon a hat that had seen better days. He was thirty-seven years old, tall, large-framed, well-made, with a bronzed face, with deep blue eyes and marked features. Something in him showed power, not rude power but old, subtle, and poetic. It was not the loftiness of John Selkirk, but yet it was lofty, all in its own still way, like deep, running water, or the purple air that the forest breathed. He had a peculiar, clear, resonant voice, and mountain health and mountain vigor.

Mountain health and mountain vigor and mountain beauty were likewise Elizabeth Burke's. Stephen Trabue was as sound and hard as a hickory nut, but Tam from the lowlands, the "city", late hours, wine and disputation, looked with a kind of envy and despairing admiration, two hours later, upon the husband and wife standing together in the rosy sunset light on the short, green, mountain grass before their door. Not all mountaineers were like them; he knew that well enough, but they had managed to become what mountaineers should be. She was thirty-three years old, and tall and strong with the grace of a young tree. When she moved it was at once with decision and spring. Something breathed about her of heights and love. It was not that anxiety, danger, sorrow, work, pain and responsibility had not marked her and marked Conan. They had;

theirs was no smoothness of vacant youth. If they knew gladness and satisfaction they knew those other things too. But out of it all, or because of it all, was coming something like triumph. Tam could think, "Of course it need not be the outward mountains —"

Here came their children about them or clinging to their knees, looking shyly at the strangers. Matthew, John, Eileen, Andrew and Conan — a fine brood, wild as fawns and yet with manners. Tam, who had not married, who said to himself that he married the law and his career, felt another thrust of envy. Then, "My God!" he thought, "the chances for heartbreak!" and rallied to his own choice.

Now in the sunset came Kirstie, who taught the children and spun between whiles or read her book. Tam, looking at her, saw more clearly than before his father and mother, and the tears welled into his gray eyes.

In the evening, by the leaping fire of pine knots, the younger children gone to bed, the older ones sitting up, still as mice, Mother Dick in her corner, Annie and Barb and Martha and Will Wright and Walter Graeme and Anthony in the outer row, the heads of this family with their kindred living with them and their guests in the place of honor, the dogs lying upon the hearth, there was talk of how everything stood, in the mountains and in the Valley and east of Blue Ridge in that Virginia that was all safe from the Indians that the mountains and the Valley took care of. How was Williamsburgh, how was Richmond, how was Norfolk? How were the ships coming in from home over the water, and what troops did they bring? How was the fiery Governor? How was Colonel Washington? What about Benjamin Franklin who had lately been in Williamsburgh? And what more was known about the battles across the sea of which they had just heard, the battles of Rossbach and Leuthen?

CHAPTER XXVIII

FIVE months lay between this day and the spring day when Tam and Trabue came visiting and stayed a week and then returned over the mountains. Five months, and as peaceful in Burke's Land as any month since the day that Colonel Matthew Burke first saw it and loved it from the top of Long Mountain. Not an Indian, solitary, few or many, had come that way. William Watts crowed, "Told ye they had their belly full!"

Not a few of the men went away that year, joining ranger companies that moved here or there, as it seemed that they were needed. Other regions than Burke's Land had trouble enough. But this cup among the mountains at last believed itself to be free and smiled in its dream. After August they kept only a handful in the fort. It cannot be said that the folk grew unwatchful. They did not, but they went more freely about their business than had been their way since the year of Braddock's defeat.

This summer went by, green and lavish. September came, gold with the green and points of purple and crimson. Mornings and evenings the air grew cool; bright and warm in the middle of the day. It drew on toward October.

Conan with Will Wright started early on this Wednesday for the piece of woods that Conan was marking off for clearing. It stood a mile from the house, between Arrow River and the mountain. At the gate Conan turned and called, "Matthew, you might as well come too!" The boy sprang up from the piece of leather he was fashioning into a belt for himself and ran to overtake the men.

Robin was with other rangers in the section of the Pastures' rivers where of late there had been trouble. Young Wat Graeme and David were fort soldiers for this month. But Conan and Walter Graeme never left the place together. The one was as watchful, responsible and ready as the other. Now Walter Graeme was at the barn, a hundred yards behind the house. But he stood without, where he could at once direct Ninian who was storing hay, and keep an eye upon the premises generally. His gun, its lock well oiled, rested against the logs beside him. Anthony, a strong man, was in the big corn patch whose end gave upon the barnyard. He was cutting down the yellowed corn stalks and binding them into shocks. His gun, too, rested beside him, propped by the corn.

William Martin's wife, in the house by the mill, had fallen and broken her leg. News of it had reached the Burkes the evening before. It was a question this morning as to whether Elizabeth or Kirstie would go to condole and offer service. Had Conan been at home it would have been Elizabeth; as it was Kirstie went. The path between the Burkes and the Jardines was a plain one, beside the river and free from forest. The houses could not see each other for the way the land lay, but they were close neighbors, the way that neighbors were counted. It was safe enough for Kirstie and Annie on the open path. John put up a plea to go too, as Willy Martin and the mill wheel were the friends of his soul. His mother nodded. "Yes, you may. Take Watch with you, Aunt Kirstie."

They went. It was the most shining morning, the sugar trees that were always early about everything, turning fast, the sumach torches glowing red, a shining and a quivering about everything! Barb and Martha were washing clothes at the brook. It lay shrunken at this time of year, in pools of water with flat, dry ledges of slate between. Barb and

Martha knelt on one of these and rubbed and scrubbed, making a lather with a great bar of soap.

In the house were Elizabeth and Mother Dick with the three children, Eileen, Andrew and Conan, and the black boy Ajax. This was a youth that Conan had bought at Staunton from a hard master who had given him scars a-many. It was thought that he might be about seventeen. Conan meant to free him so soon as he should be of age, free him and pay him wages, and had told the boy so. Now he worked very well, and the children were devoted to him. He sat on a back doorstep shelling beans, and the small Andrew sat beside him, all absorbed in a story of a fox and a deer that talked like men. Mother Dick stood at a table sorting herbs, roots and bark. They lay in bunches before her, spikenard, white plantain, bowman's root, blood-root, fern, elecampane, rattle weed, slippery elm, and other matters. On the floor at her feet the three-year-old Conan played with wooden blocks that his father had shaped and painted with the alphabet. This was a small room opening from the great, middle room of the house. In the latter Elizabeth was spinning. She sang as she span, and the wheel droned its accompaniment:

“There lived twa sisters in a bower,
Hey, Edinburgh; how, Edinburgh!
There lived twa sisters in a bower,
Stirling for aye!
The youngest o' them, O, she was a flower!
Bonny Saint Johnstoun that stands upon Tay!”

Near her, upon a bench beneath a small, square window, kneeled Eileen, her slim brown arms crossed upon the sill, her brown, pointed chin upon her arms, her brown eyes upon the finger of wood running down from the mountain side that this window commanded. The child dreamed; she

was always dreaming, making up some fairy tale of her own. Her mother, who used to do the same, glanced at her and only waited the ending of the verse to break the brown study and set a task.

“There came a squire frae the west,
Hey, Edinburgh; how, Edinburgh!
There came a squire frae the west,
Stirling for aye!
He loved them baith —”

Eileen moved at the window.

“Mother, the Little People are bending the bushes. No!” She uttered a cry and swung herself round. “Look, Mother, look!”

Her mother looked. “God! Oh, God!”

A rifle was slung above the fireplace. She had it down in a second and as she tore it and the shot pouch and powderhorn from their place, her voice rang through the house. “Indians! Ajax, run for the men at the barn! Hide the children, Mother Dick!” She ran to the door that gave upon the brook. Her voice shrilled down to the women working there. “Martha! Barb! Run — run! Indians!” She heard a shout — Walter Graeme’s: “Anthony!”

The men were coming from the barn, the women from the water — but then the line of bushes leaped and yelled. The men had guns, but so had the bushes, many more guns. Plain, dazzling horror now held the scene.

There might be fifteen Indians. They were naked save for moccasins, breechcloth, and belt that held tomahawk and shot and powder pouches. They wore war paint, though not a great deal; the scalp lock was gathered high, the red copper bodies shone in the sun; they had long

rifles, and they came bounding like deer and uttering their peculiar and terrible cry. Walter Graeme shot the foremost, but then was shot himself. He fell with two bullets in his body and died, young Wat's name upon his lips. Anthony, who had fired from the corn patch, was killed in the corn patch. The two women had some distance to run from the brook. They were seized halfway. Martha fought like a wild cat. Her teeth met in the arm of the Indian who held her. A clubbed musket brought her to the ground, and a tomahawk was buried in her brain. Barb stood quiet and was made prisoner. Ninian reached the house door. He had fired, and had had time to reload. Step by step he made the house. The door opened behind him, "Come in, Ninian!" He stumbled through and sank on the floor. "It's no use! I've got a bullet in me." Blood gushed from his lips as he spoke.

The doors were heavy and had their bars ready. The windows had heavy shutters, heavy bars. Elizabeth and Mother Dick and Ajax had just time to close this house. Light came through the loopholes, cut like an X. They pushed a settle against the farther wall and hid the children behind it. "Eileen, Eileen, keep the little ones quiet!"

They had three muskets, one for Elizabeth and one for the black boy, and now Ninian's for Mother Dick. The hope and the only hope lay in the chance of rescue being swift on the way. If it was coming, and they could hold till it came—if it was quick. The thud of bodies against the door! Elizabeth fired through the loophole, stepped aside and reloaded. She heard Ajax's gun. He was at the back door. She fired again. All the place was dusky and full of smoke. The children were crying—the little ones, not Eileen. Mother Dick was firing from the loopholed window. How Indians yelled and threatened! They were merciless, ever merciless. If rescue were coming, it must

come. Conan, Conan! If you knew — But glad, glad, glad that you are not here! Unless you come with them all to save us. Conan!

She fired again. It was pandemonium out there. Smoke, there was so much smoke! They were putting fire to the house. She heard Mother Dick's cry, "Elizabeth!" and turned. The stair led down from the upper story. They had shuttered the windows — they were few and small — in the upper story, but there were none to guard them. It had been possible to climb to one by the chimney stack. She turned, and for a moment thought she was crazed. Indians on the stair? Then, "Oh, my children! Save them, God, God!"

It was over, like an earthquake, like a forest fire, like the rending of wild beasts, like some scaffold horror in a great city. Ninian was already dead. When they saw the black boy they grunted and bound his arms behind him, but otherwise did him no harm. The old and the young woman were their prisoners, but they did not hurt them, nor even bind them. Elizabeth had her children in her arms, but she could not still the terrified crying of the youngest, the little Conan. A tall Indian looked at him, then dragged him from her and killed him before her eyes.

Smoke was rolling through the house and tongues of fire. They had opened the doors and were plundering the place of what they would, but now all must leave it. Outside they were bringing the horses from the little meadow; there were four of them there — Bonny Lass, Star, Bob and Dick. Martha lay dead, and Walter Graeme. They had scalped them. Anthony, too, had been scalped, and Ninian and the child. Trophies. O God, trophies, trophies!

There was haste. The Indians moved with a terrible precision, a terrible, efficient precision that lost no time. They pounced like the hawk and were away like the hawk.

The three women prisoners, the two children, were set upon two of the horses. The man that Walter Graeme shot was dead, but three others had their wounds. These rode the other two horses, and around all were slung as much of desirable booty as could be carried. The clamor and fury were over, the house was burning, the dead were dead and their scalps were at the belt; the prisoners were prisoners. Draw away, draw away into the forest before there was pursuit! There was a second band and a third and a fourth in this raid. They would be doing their work here, where Shawnees had been beaten so long ago! Would do it, and later all would meet at the known trysting place. From the yelling attack, each man his own commander, the Shawnees drew suddenly into an ordered column that made for the outcrop of forest from which they had come.

Elizabeth sat twisted upon Star, an arm about Andrew, a hand upon the skirt of Eileen who rode behind her. Her face, that was frozen into a mask of woe and horror, turned itself upon her burning home where lay beside Ninian the body of the child. As she looked, out from the hazels and willows bordering the brook burst Conan. He was running. He had his gun—he turned and fired at some one behind him in the bushes, then ran again, loading as he ran. He ran toward the flaming house, then the smoke blew aside and he saw the horses and their burden, swerved and came that way. Elizabeth shrieked, “No, Conan! No!” But there was not time for him to reach her. Up from the brook, after him, came leaping four Indians. The curve he had made brought him towards them rather than away—they were upon him—they had his gun, they dragged him down. Elizabeth saw him upon the earth, saw the swing gun, the lifted tomahawks—and saw no more. The out-standing trees were already about her; now an Indian struck Star. The horse started and the hemlocks hid all.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE bereaved woman had her choice. She might give her sorrow speech or sit wrapped in herself, a stone Andromache, tempting, one way or the other, her captors soon to kill her. Or she might remember her children and the old and the young woman with her. Elizabeth did the last.

The mountain population of Virginia knew well enough by now the only hopeful proceeding in such cases. Give no trouble — obey promptly — be if possible helpful — take an interest — in some way or other ingratiate yourself! Her arm pressed the little Andrew to her. He was a gentle, delicate child, and he quivered with terror and hid his eyes against her. She felt Eileen's brow upon her shoulder and the small brown fingers opening and shutting upon a fold of her gown. Mother — Mother — Mother — Mother! The one or the other was saying it all the time.

How terrible, how horrible was the forest — hard, green pines and hemlocks, coffin lids falling between her and Conan — red and yellow flaming trees or flaming houses! How horrible that the horses should be going this way, going over the mountain side, going west! "Conan! Oh, my Conan! My husband and lover!"

The way ran steeply. Now the hoofs gave and slid in loose, fat black earth, and now stones rolled beneath them. Star and Bonny Lass did the best they could, but it was becoming a question. At last the half-dozen Indians immediately with the captives halted the train. "Get down, women! Walk!"

Elizabeth descended. "Jump down, Eileen!" She held Andrew in her arms. The two jostled a big Shawnee. She smiled. "I'm sorry! I'll carry the boy. I'm strong. He's good. He'll make a fine Indian! The girl too is good. She knows how to sew and to bake, English fashion!"

The big man kept an impassive if not hostile countenance, but an Indian behind him said, "I got child like that. Go on, white woman!" The big Shawnee took Star, another Indian Bonny Lass. The wounded men still clung to Bob and Dick, but a warrior guided each horse. So they went "Indian file" along the top of a ravine, choked at bottom with a brawling stream and shattered rock. When this was passed they were off the low mountain they had been crossing and on easier ground, among great trees, with little undergrowth. Here a halt was called, the first since they had quitted Burke's Land.

There were fourteen Indians, two of them wounded, the six captives, the four horses. It was afternoon. They made a fire, and two or three vanished with their guns down the shadowy aisles, gone a-hunting. They did not seem to fear pursuit. Their raid, divided as it was into four heads, was not like to have left Burke's Land in a condition to pursue. What the three bands had done remained to be seen; this one had visited two distant cabins before it came to the Burkes' house. It had killed all there, not wishing to make prisoners at that stage.

Mother Dick and Barb could now come close to Elizabeth and the children. The old woman took Elizabeth Burke in her arms. "Eh, my dear, my dear!" "Mistress! Mistress!" wept Barb. The black boy too looked at her with a woebegone face. She stood like marble in Mother Dick's clasp, then spoke in a strange, hoarse whisper, "Aye, they're gone, they're gone, Mother Dick! I would go too, but here are Eileen and Andrew."

"Aye, who would fend for them then?" said Mother Dick. "'Tis Andrew that's going to need us all!"

She felt the thrill go through the form in her clasp. "There! Sit ye down, sit ye down, and I'll put him in your lap. Eileen's the steady, light little thing! And what do you think I'd do without you, Elizabeth, and poor Barb, and Ajax too?"

The sat on the warm brown earth beneath a pine tree. The fire was burning, they heard a rifle crack in the forest, presently there would be food. The horses, tethered to trees, cropped what low foliage and grass they could find. The plunder—guns, tools, pots and pans, cloth, adornments, what not—was now heaped together preparatory to a sorting out and a better arrangement for journeying. The wounded men lay upon moss and bright fallen leaves, and an Indian who seemed their surgeon bound a limb and extracted a ball from a shoulder. He seemed to look around for something. A few feet away purled a tiny stream. Mother Dick took up a pan that had rolled from the heap, moved to the stream, filled it and brought it to the kneeling medicine man. "Water?" She set it down, and taking her linsey skirt in her two hands tore from it a considerable piece. "'Twill have to be shorter anyhow for this traveling! Cloth?"

The naked, red-brown doctor dipped the cloth into the water. She stood a moment, watching him. "Slippery-elm bark good!" He nodded. He had, and one or two others of these Shawnees had, a little English—traders' English. "They die, you die!"

"They won't die. You too good doctor."

With that she went back to the group under the pine tree. The hunters brought in a deer and turkeys. The Indians who had thrown themselves upon the earth and lain, face down, resting after prolonged exertion, now rose

and all went about the business of cooking and eating. The turkeys were stripped of their feathers, the deer of its skin. All were opened and cleaned, then the birds and great collops of the deer set to broiling. At last all ate, seated at their choice under the trees, in the lengthening shadows of the grove. The captives were given a fair share of meat. Any who wished drink went to the stream and drank. They had found ale for which they did not care at the house they had burned, but no fire water, and that was fortunate. Except when fire water flowed their way and crazed them, the greater number of Indians knew well enough how to maintain a rude measure. They scalped in war because for ages that had been the only way to give proof in the home towns of prowess at a great distance. They took few prisoners because many would be a danger. If prisoners became wearisome or cumbersome on their all but pathless way, they would ruthlessly kill them. When they reached home they might ceremonially burn one or more. It was ancient habit, a terrible habit, sanctioned by time and revenge. But again a given war party might not burn any, and they never burned all. Hideously cruel just here, they were rarely at all cruel — save as detention was cruel — to those whom they took into the village and might in the end formally adopt into the tribe. Nor was it their way to be hatefully evil upon the road. One or two of a party might wish to be maliciously savage, but others checked this. Prisoners met with hardship enough, bonds at need, sometimes a blow, often rough or taunting words, oftenest burdens to carry. But they were not tormented or driven like beasts. And sometimes likings were taken and matters were eased. It was not impossible for mercy and chivalry to dwell in some dark, barbarian form. Or it might be caprice, or sudden fancy. And one thing always. Women that they took might be destined in the end to be-

come in their villages wives of Indians. But danger of ravishment was not one of the dangers upon the way. The Indian warrior was a continent, restrained being, compared to some soldiery. These raids fairly exhausted ammunition; the bands must get back home and recoup from French stores distributed among the villages. Home lay afar; travel fast and rest in triumph when one got there! But to captives it was not home and not triumph. How heavy were the hearts, how bodeful the minds, how lagging would have been the feet were it possible!

This band and its captives ate of forest fare and drank of the thin, running stream. When they had finished sunset was burning red through the pines and the colored, deciduous trees. The great pine tree behind the huddle of women and children stood tall and black, with transverse branches that made it like a cross. The meal eaten, there remained a little time ere deep dusk and sleep upon the earth, around the sinking fire. The Indian who could speak most English came and sat before the captives and began a speech, directed both to them and to his fellows, who promptly drew close. It seemed that he was their orator. Even the two wounded men turned where they lay and gave him attention. Now he used their own tongue, and now that the women might understand he spoke in what English he could muster. After all it was enough, eked out by look and gesture. There was fierce triumph over Burke's Land—he made them understand that. Four bands of Shawnee braves—there could be little left! If they had kindred, they were dead; if they had husbands, brothers, sons, they were dead. If they had women kin, they were dead. Or maybe the other bands had them captive. Dead. Shot, tomahawked, scalped. Or maybe kept, some of them, men and women, for the gauntlet and to eat fire. Or to live with Shawnees and be Shawnees. Never

English any more! Burke's Land! The old Shawnee battle, when Shawnees were killed. Now English killed!

"What you say, you white women?"

Elizabeth answered, "The Great Spirit says, 'If you show mercy, you will have mercy.'"

The Indian struck his hands together and laughed aloud. "Ha! Listen to white woman! 'Show good,' she say, 'have good.' *She* say that, white-skin, pale-face, *English!*"

He broke into a torrent of words in Shawnee, and it was all their wrongs. The circle about him grew rapt, then energized, then like enough to fall upon the captives, bind them to the trees and do them to a wretched death. The black boy would not have suffered with them; his skin would save him now that betrayed him so often. But it was night, and the fatigue of the day had been great, and both together accomplished a relaxing, a lassitude, that brought the pan of the balance down to do naught. The speaking Indian trailed at last his words, then he fell silent, then suddenly rose and went off into the darkness. Others made taunting and threatening speeches, but at last that also ended. All turned and lay upon their folded arms and slept, but not until they had tied their captives so that there might be no slipping away in the night time, and had set their sentinel.

The moon rose down the dark forest. The children slept. The black boy slept and Barb slept. Mother Dick and Elizabeth did not.

"Are you weeping, Elizabeth?"

"No, Mother Dick, I cannot."

"Cry a little, if you can. 'Twill do you good. And sleep a little if you can. It's these children you've got to be saving and guiding yourself for!"

"Mother Dick, you saw Conan cut down?"

"Aye, I saw. He must have got wind, been running home. Then one of those other bands they talk of — It won't do to think on, dear heart."

"He's dead."

"He was a beautiful man, Elizabeth. Now he's a beautiful spirit. Try to feel him right here with you."

"Conan, Conan, Conan! My heart will break. And my baby! And where are Matthew and John? Conan! Conan!"

She did not cry aloud, and she bowed herself above her children. The old woman who had seen much of human life and sorrow sighed and murmured, like the stream, like the wind. At last all were quiet. The cold, melancholy moon looked down, the owl hooted, the leaves that were bright in the day dropped colorless through the night. The fire was at its embers; now and again the one watching Indian fed it with a dead bough or a bit of rotting log. Then its light and the moonlight mixing, gave a strange and wavering aspect to the forms upon the earth, the sleeping human beings and the horses and the heaped plunder. At last dawn came.

This day they covered distance. They were following mountain passes and an old trail. All through the morning it was easy going — they went so fast from Burke's Land, from Last Leap, from Far Mountain! When Far Mountain was turned and lay behind instead of in front the world became New, became what Burke's Land had simply termed the West. Only Last Leap River flowing still, flowing with them and widening, kept one whisper of home. As at first, so now, the women and the children rode Star and Bonny Lass. The two wounded Shawnees upon Bob and Dick professed themselves better; the day rang high and fine and with it Indian laughter and jests of victorious men. But with afternoon came a change. The way grew rough,

up and down. They entered a long pass where the river roared among giant stones and cliffs stood sheer from the banks. They must go over these limestone masses. It grew to be difficult climbing and precipitous descents. The captives were down now from the horses that were growing terrified. The three women, strong, and used to the earth in peaks and ridges, climbed well enough. The little girl, too, proved light and agile as a cat. But the child Andrew was too little for such work. He clung to his mother's neck and she climbed with him. At last the toil of them all grew great. "Let me take him, Mistress!" cried Barb. Elizabeth panted; great beads stood upon her brow. "For a little way, Barb—" Barb carried the child, but now he was frightened, the river roared so below and the shadows were growing. He began to cry, and that was greatly dangerous. His mother took him again. "Oh, my bairn, oh, my bairn, be still!"

She held him with one arm and hand while the other caught at stems and jutting rock. They were among a vast growth of rhododendron, and almost at the giddy verge of the cliff. The river roared fifty feet below. She fared as best she might, with the child. Mother Dick would have taken him, and he loved Mother Dick and ordinarily would have gone. But something was upon him of franticness. He screamed and clung to his mother, his movement loosening her hold upon a bush of rhododendron and bringing her to her knees. The black boy, Ajax, moved a little ahead of the women with the van of the Indian file. From the first his treatment had been different from theirs. He was watched, but otherwise met with good humor and a "No great quarrel with you!" atmosphere. Now, at the child's cry, he turned his head, saw the trouble, and joined the women. He grinned at the child, making one of the faces all the children liked.

"Ajax carry Andrew. Want to hear tell about the Fox and the Deer?"

For a moment it seemed that Andrew did, but then, No, the mother was the nearest, the dearest, the first! He buried his face in her neck. She was now upon her feet. Her face was ghastly and desperate. "Let him alone. Don't pay attention. Don't make a noise. Let us go on."

They would have obeyed, but the big, hostile Indian came at that moment from the file behind. "No good. No travel this way!" His hands were upon the child. Elizabeth shrieked and held, but he was dragged from her. "Oh, don't look!" cried Barb. But the mother looked and saw the small body lifted and swung and tossed from the cliff head. Fifty feet and the rocks and the rushing river!

The next day after this they arrived at the trysting place with the three other bands. Last Leap River ran into a river with an Indian but no English name. At the meeting point spread a pebbly strand and towered a sycamore so old that it was quite hollow, and so enormous that a small human family might have harbored within it. Here the fourteen Shawnees and their captives made camp and waited. So timed were their operations and instinctively harmonious that a couple of hours was all their waiting. The second band appeared, having come by the same trail. But the third and the fourth, this band could tell, had elected to take another way home, what they called the "old way." Moreover, though they were the same people, their villages were not the same but stood one on one river, one on another.

This was a band of twenty, and they had horses with them and plunder and three captives. There had been others, but these had died or been killed upon the way. The three were Duncan McLeod and Sarah and Maria Berry. There was meeting. "Oh, Duncan McLeod, tell us —"

"I'm glad to see you living, Mrs. Burke, though so sadly. And you too, Mother Dick. Aye, they gave us a stroke for our stroke. But Burke's Land isn't wiped out — no, it isn't! It's sore hurt, but it will scramble up and begin again!"

"Who is left?"

"Why, I'd say a good number of folk, though I can't just rightly say who. I was walking to the fort and I heard a rattlesnake in the bush. 'It's late for *you*,' I said, and turned that way to kill him. Then there was another behind me, and it confused me. Then I heard a gun and a shout from Watts' cornfield and then two Indians shot up like weeds right by me. I was dealing with them, when a third got me by the throat from behind. Aye, they dragged me down, and tied me fast and left me there in the laurel till they had done all the murdering they could, and then, coming out, they picked me up.— It's sore for a McLeod!"

"Three, and they dragged you down, but you are living! Do you think Conan Burke —"

Maria Berry had her say. "Oh, he's dead — Mr. Burke! I heard John Young say so when we met that other band in Last Leap. He said he was dead, and Walter Graeme too. John Young had a great wound and he may be dead now. Those Indians and those they had with them went their ways, and we came over the terrible mountain and down here. No, Mrs. Burke, I don't know anything about Miss Kirstie and your boys. Oh, my God! What's going to become of us?"

Sarah Berry was a different sort, a tall, gaunt, mountain woman, yellow-brown as with walnut stain, taciturn, with eyes that seemed to find their home upon the remotest mountain line. She sat — the bodies of all were most tired — with her chin upon her knees, her hand closed on one of the great pebbles that covered the strand. Now she

straightened herself. "Yon river's running still west. It ain't a-going to empty into the ocean that our folks crossed when they came from the old country. Where's it going to empty? Who knows that, and who knows what is going to happen in the end? I'm a widow too, Mrs. Burke, for they killed Jack at the fort. They got over the stockade. A widowed woman — and my son Edward's gone too. I reckon we're not caring where the river empties, or what's the ocean, or what will happen. But of course you've got your little girl. That's one string of the harp, so to speak."

The two parties of Indians feasted and were triumphant together that night, and the next day and the next traveled in company. But the second band also had wounded men, and one of these a chief and badly hurt. In the end it must go more slowly than the smaller band that first had quitted Burke's Land. The fourth morning saw parting. The one company tarried longer in the camping place, the other went forward. Both were bound for Shawnee country, but not for the same town. They parted in a mighty grove of wine-red oaks, and the captives in the first band never saw again the captives in the second.

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CHAPTER XXX

YET Beauty had her gleanings as they journeyed. Marvellous rolled the October forest, and marvellous the clear skies at night. What were the stars and was this a star too, or the slave of a star? The weather had an October soundness. Indians were like birds for knowing the way, and sometimes for hours the going was as though a road had been built for them. They were great journeyers and knew how to establish a rude comfort. The hunters brought in game, the fire builders had swiftly a blue, a golden, a saffron, leaping flame. They knew how to travel, to spare at the right moments and urge when all was fresh. And now the wounded men were better, and home drew nearer, and their spirits bounded. This fourteen differed, one from another, as any fourteen would differ. There were among them hard men and men who leaned to kindness, and now, in the general rosy light, the influence of the latter increased.

Eileen sprang somewhere from an enchantress. So quick was she, so wide-mouthed, brown-skinned, great-eyed with breadth between the eyes, so tangle-haired and singing-voiced, so withdrawn at times from this earth, and then again as much here as any fawn or hopping bird. There was a Shawnee who took a liking to her, Long Thunder, a man of forty, with a wide mouth and wide eyes of his own. He was a great brave. Henceforth she was safe. The women saw it and breathed more easily for her.

They also might feel that soon and terrible Death had passed them by. For them only lasting captivity, and after Indian notions perhaps not even hard captivity. Now they

cooked for their captors and carried great part of the plunder, and now they did not ride the horses. Indians rode, with laughter and emulation as to horsemanship. Women! They had become just that, though with a fair skin. They themselves had brought it about with their readiness to save the lives of one another and of the child in the midst of them.

Mountains neared them—the long wave mountains of the Appalachians towered above them, passed and quitted them for the distance. West to east they went, the herd of them, west to east like the earth. They crossed valleys, narrow valleys and wide valleys, valleys mantled by the mighty forest and valleys with great stretches of tall grass—Indian meadows. So it had been in the great Valley of Virginia when these women had entered it years ago. The type of country remained familiar enough, it was still the vast system of mountain and hill and rich river bottoms, the great, wide lift of earth that ran from Canada, where Montcalm and Wolfe were arrayed against each other, to Georgia where the Indians were not astir. It was still Virginia that they were going through, though Virginia without Virginians, without a white face, without an English word. They did not know how far Virginia went, that old kings and queens had granted. But the highest mountains, the long Alleghany Front, had now rolled by them toward that east they might hardly hope to see again. These were lesser waves and wider valleys between. They were going, they knew, down toward the Ohio. Still Virginia, but now they might perhaps meet Frenchmen, the usurpers, the builders of forts, the stirrers-up.

There flowed many rivers, great and small. It was the autumn when nothing in Nature was swollen and turbulent. The Indians knew the fords. When there was none they swam the stream, guiding the four horses, watching the

tightly bound plunder. Of the five captives Elizabeth and Ajax could swim, and they with two Indian youths drew Mother Dick and Barb across. Long Thunder took Eileen upon his shoulders. Sun and wind, or fire if it was at eve, dried the women's garments. They were much in rags now, their skirts shortened, moccasins upon their feet.

It was at eve, coming up from a considerable river, that they first came upon Frenchmen. A small party of Shawnees and Mingos were camped upon this bank. Their smoke had been observed. A solitary swimmer crossed first, recognized and received recognition, and sent to the bank he had quitted a cry of assurance. All crossed and fraternized, finding their fire built for them and their supper secured. News and news again, the pipe and jollity. The Shawnee-Mingo party had with them two French officers, a father and son, the youth a lieutenant, the father a captain. It seemed that they might be on some mission — representation, treaty, direction, praise or blame, gift-bringing or what not. At any rate they had very honorable treatment. Supper ended and the circle made about the fire, the oldest man in the Shawnee-Mingo party rose and with a great gesture told how welcome to the hearts of their brothers were the Shawnees home from war. He took his seat and Long Thunder rose and with a great gesture told how welcome to warriors with scalps at their belts was the meeting with those whose feet were upon the path and who would certainly achieve. He sat down. Ceremonial silence, then, "Will our French father speak to us?"

The French captain stood and spoke in the Shawnee tongue which he possessed very well, and in such French words as he made sure were understood. He had gesture, and he knew all about *camaraderie* and was skilful in many keys. It was his part so to rouse Indians, each time he

spoke, as to ensure the completest possible extermination of the foes of France. He spoke, and there sat and lay on the red earth beneath a cedar three English women and an English child. Captives, bound for a Shawnee village. The Indians who knew this captain sat prepared to be toned, higher and higher, to a wild, exultant, mystic hatred. And now what? He spoke and pleased, but it was so different a kind of pleasing. Praise of their wonderful being; their straightness and health and beauty and control, when they wished it, of the body and its passions; praise of their land and their villages and the life of the tribe; praise of their relations with the Great Spirit who made all things; praise of their stories and traditions, their skill in hunting, their endurance and fortitude, their high days and holy days, feasts and dances; praise of the way they were learning to combine for large purposes, praise of their mind. He laughed and relaxed and was at once easy and high. He said at last that he did not feel like war to-night because he had become aware of a great, quiet, old-prophet spirit that lived in this wood, by this river. He did not know who the spirit was or had been. He was very old and gentle, having outlived war, and much of his time he spent in the Happy Hunting Ground, but now and then he came back here. He was now very large, like a cloud; a thin cloud at night that couldn't be seen and yet might fill a valley. He, the French captain, was speaking of things that he thought might please him.

The Shawnees and the Mingos thoroughly believed. Of course there were spirits, good and bad, and of course they might fill a grove like mist, like wind. They, too, began to feel the old spirit, and relaxing from their expectation of the wine of hating yet were happy. And all were tired with travel, and it was not long before the Frenchman ceased to speak, and shook hands with a Mingo chief and

with Long Thunder, and all began to think of sleep around the quiet fire, with the old spirit breathing in this wood, his grove.

In the morning, when they were up at dawn, the old spirit still in a measure breathed around. The three women and the black boy prepared the breakfast. When it was eaten, and while a movement of packing and making ready for travel arose in the several bands, the two white men spoke to the women. The elder, the captain, had no English, or the barest, the captives no French. The captain spoke, and his son, the lieutenant, translated. "My father say, Mesdames, that he experience heartfelt sorrow for your plight. He say but he see plainly that you have courage and the good sense. He say life among Indians is not bad when you have the good sense and courage. Often it is good enough. He say he hope you will find it so. He say tell you he think your lives are safe, since he see you have had the great good sense to make yourselves needed, and even a little liked. He say, Take courage. He say it may even come that weary war will be over and good peace made and prisoners returned. He say, Madame, you have his admiration and his wishes for your happiness come again."

Beginning with them all, his words were at last addressed to Elizabeth. She stood, a beautiful woman, in her torn dress, with her thick, long hair in braids, Indian fashion. She seemed evidently the controller here, though the old woman, too, had force. Her face had the beauty of tragedy, thought the French captain, remembering Corneille, read in his youth. He felt compassion, though of course he could do naught. That is, he did not feel sufficiently compassionate.

Elizabeth said to the young man, "Thank him. Can he tell us when the war will be over?"

But no, the French captain could not tell that. It seemed to be a long war. At the last, of course, France would win, as she should win, having the right of it. Then there would be peace, on a new footing. It was quite possible, highly probable indeed, that a clause in the treaty would provide for the return to their friends of English captives living among the Indian allies of His Majesty the King of France. Madame might carry that with her as a reasonable hope. And let her take his assurance, who had stayed in many an Indian village, that life there, when taken with good sense and good humor, had decency, savor and pleasantness. Witness the fact of which she must be aware, that ransomed young folk, after years with such or such a tribe, would run away and return to it, at whatever personal danger. And so darkness and despair were perhaps not so dark and not so despairing after all. He had observed that life had a liking, as emphatic as it was strange, for alternation. And so with compliments and a quite deep bow he took his leave, and the young man his son followed him.

And in an hour the one party went north and the other continued to the west, drawing nearer and nearer the Ohio.

It was true that they had shown good sense. Even Barb, who at times was heedless. As for Eileen, she was the darling! But oh, the four, the four who are gone! And Kirstie and Robin. And oh, Conan, my Conan! Oh, home, home, home, that comes never again!

The days ran purple and gold and red. The wild grapes hung in blue abundance. The chestnuts fell from their lofty trees, the walnuts from theirs. The persimmons ripened. Game abounded. The great and small birds which lived in the forest, and the birds flying south. The latter were a marvel, the vast number of them! Fish swam in the clear waters. Elizabeth and Mother Dick marked their

way by these rivers. "Do you make a map like in your head?" asked the latter. Elizabeth nodded.

"What do you mean to do with it, child?"

"I mean to go back to Burke's Land. If the war does not end soon, or if we are not to hear that it ends. When Eileen is a little bigger, so that she can travel better. When summer comes or autumn like this. I know we cannot in the winter."

"You and the child and me and Barb and Ajax?"

"Aye, just."

They came to a wide river, and the Shawnees built a raft on which to go over it. "We could not do this," said Mother Dick.

"No. But we can go up the river until it narrows so that we can cross. Then come down the other bank to the track again."

It was marshy here at the river side where the raft was being launched. Rudest structure of lopped trees bound with withes and deerskin tugs and heaped now with the plunder from Burke's Land, it swayed gently in the lapping water. Long Thunder swung Eileen to his shoulder and took her down through the reeds. "Raft. Mother says it's a raft. I never saw a raft!" But when she was set high upon great bags and bundles, she sat as though she had seen it before, a little dreaming figure.

Long Thunder turned. The three women were coming as best they might. Marsh and water holes and bending canes. Of a sudden he went to them and with a guttural word or two as suddenly lifted Elizabeth Burke, bore her across the fifty feet of mire and water, and set her beside her daughter. Mother Dick and Barb followed as best they might.

Two Shawnees with poles managed the raft. The others and the Negro swam. The horses swam. The river was

not so tremendously wide; bright trees stood up from the farther shore and were mirrored to a leaf below; overhead arched a stainless azure sky. It looked captors and captives, and then again, to a hypothetical spectator at a little remove, it might seem a household migration of nomads, such a migration as was forever taking place, too numerous to count, upon the wide earth.

CHAPTER XXXI

THE Indian town upon one of the westward running affluents of the Ohio, near to its junction with the greater stream, held from twenty to thirty lodges and huts, the former the greater habitations, the latter the less. All were made of sapling posts and beams with walls of bark torn from great trees. The hearth of each was set in the middle of the dwelling and the smoke went out of an opening in the bark roof. Floors were trodden earth, windows there were none, for doors hung skilfully woven mats. In the greater structures several families might dwell together, in the smaller ones the smaller group. Besides these there stood the largest lodge of all, the council lodge. The town had no streets, but the dwellings seemed to have settled, like a flock of crows in a field, haphazard. A maze of paths ran in and out among the huts, widening here and there into breadths of bare ground, gathering places for this or that, but for the rest the tawny winter grass covered the earth, or garden patches showed untidily where corn, beans and pumpkins had been. A number of great trees, haphazard like the huts, some of them pines, some leafless oaks, beeches and sycamores, spread their boughs in the crystal clear, February morn. The town placed itself in the angle made by the river and a creek that entered it flashing and singing. Away from the town and away from the water spread on all sides forest, limitless, winter forest. Hills and wide vales, rolling country, but no mountains. The mountains existed far to the eastward. The great backbone ridge of the Alleghanies was many and many a league away.

It breathed late winter, cold and clear, no snow nor sleet

that was worse than snow, but a frozen earth. It was not the winter following the autumnal raid upon the settlement known as Burke's Land—no, but the winter after that winter, the second winter.

The Seven Years' War kept on and kept on. As far as this village knew, it might prove a fourteen years' war, a twenty-one years' war. By that time all the English in this country would be dead. But it seemed that there were more English over the Great Water than there were fish here in the streams. It might take the French fathers a long time yet to take all the fish in their creels and nets. Of course they would be taken at last! They thought this, knowing nothing of Minden and Quiberon, but knowing, for news came in Indian land like winds through the forest or drift down the rivers or migrating birds that perched, of battles and defeats, to the north, the northeast, for the French fathers and Indians who helped them. What then? Brave men with a good cause were often defeated, but at last they defeated. So they heard of Fort Du Quesne taken and the name changed, of Niagara and Crown Point and Ticonderoga, and so they were hearing of Quebec in Canada and the Plains of Abraham, and Wolfe dead and Montcalm dead, and yet they had confidence, and believed that the war might march for a long time to come and surely at last to victory. The French fathers were very powerful, and they laughed and made oratory among the tribes, and beginning afresh every spring the painted war parties went forth with the scalp lock drawn high, and an eagle feather stuck in it.

Mother Dick stepped from a hut where she had installed herself as nurse to a sick youth. Though now an old woman yet she stood unbowed, with all her faculties intact. Her age and her wisdom were her saviors here in this village. She went freely, and was turned to in need. She stood,

wrapped in a matchcoat that Long Thunder had given her, and looked at the weather and at the gray trees against the blue sky. A hawk sailed overhead, from the council lodge a bowshot away came the measured voice of Long Thunder speaking to the assembled men. She knew of what he was speaking. Winter now might envisage spring. Snow might still fall, even a heavy snow, but spring was on the path, spring was on the path! When it came, when it was known to have come to the high mountains as well as to this country, then she knew the war party would go forth. That would be what Long Thunder and the other braves and the old men and Rain-in-River the prophet were talking about. Planning and exulting and naming their prey. What part of the Great Valley or its western mountain boundary, or even its eastern, would Long Thunder and his braves descend upon? A horror ran through her to think of it, whatever part it might be. Last spring a war party had gone forth and in the summer it returned with many scalps and a prisoner whom they burned. They burned him with long torments and those who set their wills against it could do naught! It was necessary, said the fanatics of cruelty, and did it. And now the same thing would happen when the spring came and the summer came in song and beauty and love. A falling tree had lamed Long Thunder last spring and he had been stay-at-home. It would not be so this year. She heard his voice, that of a great chief, and not a bad man according to his lights. No, not a weak nor a bad man; rather a fine man.

Ajax came by the hut, walking toward the council house. He wore a young Indian's winter garb that was slight enough, though not so slight as the summer garb. He had not the Indian's high and bold features, nor sinewy frame nor panther-like step, yet he did not lack his own grace of barbarian youth. And he was happy enough here where

men did very little work except hunting and fishing, which he liked. They danced, and he liked that, though he did not like their music. He liked his own, and he was singing a stave of his own as he moved toward the lodge. He had been taken into the tribe, and to-day Long Thunder had told him to join the other young men sitting in a circle, listening meekly to the oratory of great braves and elders. Ajax did not wish to go to war, but his wishes might not be able to prevent his doing so. Yet they might leave him at home, and as he was singing he was hoping for that. He was quite brave enough, but his taste was not trained for warring as was the taste of these. Moreover he had been born and brought up among white folk, and he liked them well enough, all except one cruel master. His name was now Black Hawk, but as he walked toward the council house he was singing with unction, in a low, rich voice:

“When I come to Heaven

Heaven!

Who’s the first I’se gwine to see?

Heaven!

Oh, I’se gwine to see my Lord a-shining —”

Mother Dick watched him pass under the pine trees around the men’s lodge. Long Thunder had ceased to speak and now old Mighty Beaver, who was incredibly old and knew the stories of the fathers as no other Shawnee knew them, was relating in his voice like a small wind in dry reeds deeds of old time that must be emulated and yet might never be approached. All the men were there. The village elsewhere seemed a women’s village, as it did during the raids afar, or for the matter of that the great hunts. In winter all the tasks that might be were done within the hut, by the clear shining fire. But yonder a string of girls

brought fagots from the forest and others were carrying water.

Eileen had been with the girls to the forest. She had her bundle of dry sticks gathered from the ground, but in addition a branch of white pine hung with cones. This she held so that it made for her a canopy, a moving arbor of green shot with blue sky. Under this she walked in her dress of an Indian girl, a child, a fay, a seedling of Scotland and Ireland dropped in an American forest, in an Indian tribe. She was slight, wide-eyed, embrowned by all out-of-door-ness until her hue was not many points removed from that of her companions. A subtle, curious light played all the time through her small face, and when she smiled some enchantment happened. She did not often laugh. She liked to be alone, and sometimes one had to shout at her or touch her to make her hear and heed. Yet in other ways she was quick as any snake. Though she did not laugh nor caper she was assuredly not unhappy. Tears were rare. The Indian children prized her. "Come with us, Star Daughter!" "Tell us a story, Star Daughter!" If there was quarrel she slid out of it and went away to the grown folk. They liked her, too, though sometimes they shook their heads over her. As for Long Thunder, there had never been the least unkindness there. Others might feel the weight of his hand, but not Eileen.

Mother Dick marked her, walking under her pine bough, the bundle of sticks upon her shoulder. "She's shooting up. She's grown taller this winter. Eh! After a while she'll be almost forgetting Burke's Land." Eileen left the others and with her pine branch and her fagots moved toward Long Thunder's hut that was a good-sized one set under a vast oak beside the stream. She vanished. The old woman turned back to her patient. He lay asleep. Stopping, she felt his skin, then mended the fire and set by him

on the earth a gourd filled with water after which she drew her matchcoat more closely about her and stepped out of doors, where she, too, directed her steps to Long Thunder's house. Halfway there she met Moon-in-water and Flower-that-opens who were pursuing a path that crossed hers. Neither of them now seemed as poetic as their names. They were Indian women, marked by toil.

"Good day, English-wise-woman!"

"Good day, Flower-that-opens and Moon-in-water."

"The men are making a mighty talking. The ice is melting."

"Aye, presently the spring will be here. I never used to see her in black."

"Anan?"

"You don't understand. Well, no matter."

"Is Eagle-on-cliff better?"

"Yes. He will get well."

"That is good, English-wise-woman!"

They parted. Mother Dick went on to the hut under the oak. It was a large hut, neatly made, with a plume of white smoke coming out of the hole in middle roof. Beside it, falling to the south and out of the shadow of the oak, spread a considerable garden patch, now bare earth and winter remnants. On another side there was made a shed for a horse, and likewise a structure of poles and bark where might go on the cutting up and drying of meat and such activities. Under the oak a great kettle hung on crossed sticks over a fireplace. A fire was burning and Blossoming Grape, Long Thunder's second wife, sat on the earth watching the kettle. The sky hung bright, the air was still, the sun shone with mounting power, the February day was neither cold nor dreary. As for the sylvan homestead, it was little worse than the earliest English dwellings in America, much on a par perhaps with early dwellings in the British Isles.

The life of this village, the life of this tribe, that too might carry a handful of reminders of early Europe.

Mother Dick came to the entrance where hung a well-wrought mat. Here before it, in a great streak of sunshine, rested Eileen's bundle of fagots, and upon the bundle Eileen herself. The pine bough she had placed so that it overarched the doorway, the fagots and herself. She sat like an elf queen, in her hand an empty bird's nest, and lifted her brown eyes to Mother Dick. "A giant threw it down out of a tree. The ice is all melting, Mother Dick. It broke when I tried to step upon the stream."

Mother Dick lifted the mat. Within, after the bright day without, was at first dusky enough, a warm twilight in which masses did not present details. Then the eyes grew accustomed. When the mat was fastened back there would be light enough, but now it hung so, making the interior dim. This again was divided by hanging mats into two chambers. In the first and much the largest fire burned on the middle hearth. Fed with clean, resinous wood and sun-dried sticks it was chiefly clear flame, and the light smoke went up straight to the opening above and there escaped. Against the bark walls stood or hung barbarian weapons, barbarian clothing, barbarian articles of household economy. In this room and the inner one low frames of wood covered with skins formed the beds. There was left, about the fire, a considerable clear space.

Here, seated upon a mat, Elizabeth was singing to sleep her babe and Long Thunder's. She sang in a low voice, the red light shining over her and the three-months babe,

"Hynd Horn's bound, oh! and Hynd Horn's free,

With a hey lillelu and a how lo lan;

Where was ye born, or in what countree?

And the birk and the broom blaws bonnie."

The singing stopped. "Mother Dick, come in!"

The child was asleep. Rising, she laid it upon a bed and covered it warm, then came again to the fire and the old woman. As she did so the red light flowed against her. She wore an Indian dress of the better kind, soft doeskin, shaped and fringed, with doeskin leggings and moccasins. Her hair in two braids was drawn forward, hanging over her breast and below her waist. Her face between the braids showed thin and keen and still. She was like the Elizabeth of Burke's Tract, very like the Elizabeth of Burke's Land, and yet she was farther on — farther on — farther on — in experience.

The two women sat upon the earth by the fire. The mat before the entrance shut out the gaudy general day. They were, as it were, to themselves, in a deep, removed place. Without, in the winter sunshine, Eileen rested her small bones a little longer, then rose from her fagots and fared away upon her own adventures. These brought her first to the mighty oak and the fire and great kettle beneath and to Blossoming Grape who was watching both. This was a young and gentle Indian woman who saw no enemies and had none. Eileen sat down beside her and the two watched the glowing embers beneath the kettle and presently began to see small moving sprites and salamanders.

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CHAPTER XXXII

ELIZABETH said, "They are heating their blood for war."
"Aye."

"The ice is melting. Another month and they may go."
"Aye."

"Where will they go and what houses will they burn and what men and women and children will they kill?"

"God keep us all."

They fell silent again. The fire sent out flames, saffron and blue and green, rose and amethyst. It had, too, a rhythmic sound, and fragrance came forth with its warmth and light.

Said Elizabeth, "That Mingo who left yesterday for his own people had the story that I have heard three times. A white man was seeking a white woman through the tribes. I thought — oh, I thought —"

"What did you think?"

"I thought, 'Maybe it is Conan!'"

Mother Dick drew in her breath. "His ghost?"

"Maybe. Of course he died. I saw it. I see it even without shutting my eyes."

"It's an old story, Elizabeth. I've heard it too. I heard it last summer, and the winter before that. It's a legend, like. Something like it may have run through America ever since Christopher Columbus. Spaniards and English and French. Taking captives is old, and faithfulness seeking is old. Before this war a white man that wasn't a Frenchman might have wandered, seeking. But now he

couldn't do that. The first village, the first hunters or war men he met—. When I first heard it I thought of Gurdy that went after his sisters. But all Burke's Land knew long ago he must be dead."

"Yes. And Conan died the day we left.—I know it, I know it—but the strangest dreams come to me. But he is dead and I dream of heaven."

Again they kept silence. Behind them the babe stirred and uttered a little cry. Elizabeth rose and soothed it to sleep again then returned to the fire. "He's well and growing."

"Yes."

"You love him, Elizabeth."

"Yes, I love my babe. How could I help it?"

She sat with her deep eyes upon the coals and embers below the flame. "How long ago is it that we came here? I know the seasons. Round and round again! But what is the use of counting so? It is much longer than that. At first all the enmity, and dread for us all and most dread for Eileen. Do you remember how we used to cower together? And they said they would send her with Barb to the other town.—Long Thunder! No one will hurt Long Thunder's daughter. So I came into this hut with Blossoming Grape.—Yes, it is a long, long time. I had to save us and I had to wait. But now it is over."

Going to the entrance she moved the mat and looked without. Eileen was gone; none other sat or stood or lay near; there were only the sparkling sun, the bare earth and distant oratory. She returned. "We will go, Mother Dick, the week after them."

"Go?" whispered the old woman. "To Burke's Land."

"Aye. Burke's Land. Home."

"Elizabeth, it is far, far! And dangerous."

"I know we may die. But die going home. I know

that, and yet I know that we shall get there. I do not know how I know."

"Do you know that I shall get there, Elizabeth?"

Elizabeth stood silent; then, "No, I do not know that, Mother Dick, but I do not know the other way either. Oh, I want you to get there, to reach home with us!"

"What of Barb? We cannot get her."

"No. Maybe one day she will come back to us."

"Ajax?"

"He's happier here."

"Aye, that's true.—And the babe, Elizabeth, the babe? There's no taking a babe through that wilderness!"

Elizabeth's face worked. "I've chosen. I'm going to leave him with his father and Blossoming Grape. He'll grow up. Maybe one day in heaven when all things are helped and solved—"

She paced the hut, her hands clasped behind her neck. "I had to wait for Eileen to grow bigger and stronger and for the watch upon us to fall away. Then I had to wait for him to be born. And always there has been no escape or traveling in winter. But now spring will presently come and the men are going away. If I wait another year, Eileen will be just as the Indian girls and all the bonds will be stronger. I cannot wait. What shall I, what shall we, find in Burke's Land? Ashes of what we have loved—not even the ashes! But some one may be there, and I am going! And I will not have Eileen, either, an Indian woman, an Indian wife. I may see her die on the way, and I may die, but we are going!"

She came and knelt by the fire, then sank to one side and lay with her head upon the other's knees. "Mother Dick—Mother Dick!"

"Aye, child, aye! You know the road to Calvary."

"I ache, sitting in this hut, with the love of Conan.

Long Thunder is not an evil man. He has Indian goodness and strength. Yet I am I and Conan is Conan and Long Thunder is Long Thunder. And what does it matter that Conan is dead?"

"We will start, Elizabeth. And when?"

They laid their plans by the red and gold and blue fire. Not too soon after the going of the war party, for they who might not be able to make fires must have at least the springtime with them. Not too late, not into the summer, for then they might meet bands returning into Shawnee country. A moon nigh to the full, so that till the danger of pursuit was over they might travel day and night. How long should they have to travel? With great good fortune they might reach Burke's Land in perhaps a month. But the fortune would have to be great.

The entrance mat moved. Eileen entered and found them whispering. "Are you seeing the elves, Mother? Blossoming Grape and I put a corncob under the kettle and when it was all red a little corn spirit came and sat upon it!"

It was well into March when the war party left the town. The forest stood leafless, but the swelling buds made a soft and purplish roof. Underneath, over the brown earth, bloomed the white stars of the *puccoon*. Up from the south came the very earliest birds. Yet it was cold, with great winds. Snow no longer fell in this part of the world, but when the warriors came to the mountains they might find flurries and drifts. Streams in turmoil would be the rule for streams. During the late winter the beasts of the forest had accomplished one of their mysterious disappearances, and had hardly returned. The warriors knew that they would tighten their belts before they came to English country — to Indian country that the English had seized! There was scarcity in the village itself, late winter scarcity that

always came round. But the warriors painted themselves with abandon, and every resource was drawn upon to make a feast, and the great pipe was smoked, and there were deep harangues and a wild dance of assured victory. Then, on a chill and windy morning, the old men, the few hunters and disabled who were left, the boys just too young to go, the women, girls and children, watched this division of a forest army forth, gave them cries of encouragement, and when the trees hid the last man, hung a moment, then turned stolidly to the lessened village and diminished life.

"They are gone to war," said the boys. "Ho! Now we are men."

"They are gone to war," said the old men. "Perhaps we shall see them return and perhaps we shall not."

"They are gone to war," said the women. "But work has not gone away."

The March winds blew. Then March went out like a lamb and April began to rain with streaks of sunshine between the showers. The sunshine increased, the bright rain fell less frequently. All the women fell to digging and planting. Food was not plentiful in the village. The hunters brought in what they could and the fishermen caught all they could, but many a pot and spit went empty much of the time. The maize that had been saved from the autumn dwindled away. The nuts were gone. They dugged roots, but that was not the best kind of diet. However, they would not really starve. The game would come back, the warm days arrive, the maize spring from the black earth.

Elizabeth and Mother Dick saved their handfuls of maize rubbed from the ear. They had a little store of this, and also thin pieces of dried meat. At last one day they put all this into a packet wrapped in doeskin, and that into a larger bag. They had worked and saved so secretly that none knew of their store, hidden behind a great length of

bark, in Long Thunder's hut. Other matters were there, two knives, a gun, a small bag of powder and shot. In the winter Elizabeth had suddenly one day said to Long Thunder, "Show me how you make fire by drilling one stick into another." He showed her, and she sat beside him and patiently practised it. "It's a good thing," she said, "to know," and he nodded.

The moon grew towards the full. Spring was here. The frogs choired among the reeds by the stream, the flowering trees were flowering. Elizabeth stood up from the babe lying upon a mat and spoke to Blossoming Grape. "The Great Spirit has sent me a dream. I do not know altogether what it means. If I am taken away from this babe, you will care for him?"

"Yes," said Blossoming Grape. "He is Long Thunder's. And you know that I like you too, Prize from the English! I will love him and be very kind to him. But the dream from the Great Spirit may not have meant that at all. They are very deceiving."

"Sun in Corn will give him milk with her babe. You will ask her, Blossoming Grape? She will do it for you."

"Yes, I will, I will!" said Blossoming Grape, with tears in her eyes. "But you are not going to die."

"I do not know whether I am or not. But you will see to him and love him."

"Yes, yes! I and Star Daughter."

"And you will tell Long Thunder that I thanked him for much."

"Yes, I will, I will!"

"You will say nothing now to any one of my dream, Blossoming Grape."

She dominated Blossoming Grape as she dominated the hut, at times even with Long Thunder in it. The young Indian woman promised.

Eileen in these days went with the diggers of roots that were known to be edible. She brought back her share from the forest, and with them blossoming branches. Perhaps she had seen only the trees, the wild flowers and her companions; perhaps she had seen moving, airy forms that were not the three, unless they were other forms of the three. She came in and shared the roots between her mother and Mother Dick, then went away like a dreamer to sit by the stream. If other children came around, she told them a story. Her mother and Blossoming Grape digged, hoed and planted, but when she offered to help her mother said, "No, I do not wish you tired out before—" She did not finish but stooped to break a clod with her fingers.

The moon was nearly full. It began to shine at dusk and shone all night. Eileen had slept some hours when she felt her mother bending over her. Her eyes opened. "Hush, hush, child! Don't speak. Put on your moccasins and your dress."

The fire yet made light in the hut. Blossoming Grape was not here. She had spent this night with her sister, Sun in Corn. Perhaps Elizabeth had suggested her doing so, perhaps Elizabeth had kissed her when she went.—Eileen, wide-eyed, put on her slight, Indian clothing. Mother Dick, too, was in the hut, and she had a bag and was putting things into it. She and mother moved so quietly and their shadows thrown against the wall were so great and strange. Little Brother was sleeping soundly in the bear skins. Mother knelt beside him and put her arms over him and her head down upon her arms. Then she stood up and took the gun from the corner and said, "Come, Eileen. Don't make the least noise!"

The moon whitened the whole world. Even under the oak it seemed white, even among the trees that fringed the stream. As for the stream itself not only did it run white

but it had a white mist over it. Mother seemed to like that. She and Mother Dick and Eileen stepped into the stream. It had hardly a foot of depth, it was cold, it slid against them. They walked up it, in the white mist. So they left the village and the big, communal, sloping field where would wave the maize. Now they and the stream were in the forest. In the mist and the moonlight it stood about them. They were so chilled in the cold water! They left the stream and sitting upon the earth dried and chafed their feet. "Don't cry, Eileen, don't cry! We are going home."

"But you said they were all dead, Mother!"

"Aye, I did. But Aunt Kirstie or Robin may be left, or Andrew and Phemie in Burke's Tract. We are going to see. And there are the mountains and the land. Broken pieces of home."

The moon shone white. The frogs were still at their love songs and a hoot owl in the forest called with a creepy rhythmic sound. There came from everywhere and clung a scent of the earth and unfolding leafage and bloom. The two women and the child began their long journey.

CHAPTER XXXIII

AFTER three days they put away the fear of pursuit by the village. But more or less closely they were taking the way by which they came. There was no path, but at wide intervals one came upon a painting upon rock or tree, or maybe a heap of stones like a cairn. Indian hunters, Indian travelers, Indian war band — all were possible and a falling into a worse fate than that from which they ran. At last with deliberation they lost this "path." Then all was blank wilderness.

Wilderness, but they knew the east when they saw it, and the north star when the stars shone. They knew that trees stretched their longest arms to the south, and which quarter had the thickest moss. They knew that the rivers headed in the mountains of the east. They knew that the country must become ever more broken, rolling and hilly. The two women had their memories of a region traversed, though then from east to west.

The rivers. Those that they must follow made as it were one bough of the vast water tree. Follow, follow, branch from bough, until at last, up in the mountains, Last Leap River! But water flowed so bewilderingly in this accidented land. They had to make crossings and again crossings. And they were rivers of the month of April, not the month of October.

The widest river came first. It was that one which, eighteen months before, they had crossed upon a raft. The raft was broken to pieces and its logs gone to the great river of the Mississippi and the Mexican Gulf. These three could not manage another. "Face north!" said

Elizabeth. "Tramp until it narrows." But ere they had gone a mile the greatest piece of good luck happened to them. It was Elizabeth who saw it first. "A canoe in the reeds. Hush! Wait!" They crouched a long while among hazels and dwarf willows, but no one came to the empty canoe. Then Elizabeth bowed herself together so that the bushes would hide her and crept toward it. The old woman and the child saw her stand up and beckon. "Come, Eileen," said Mother Dick. "'Twill be an old, left-behind canoe."

"No!" said Eileen. "God the Father put it there!"

However that might be, there it lay, just moving with the flood, ancient and worn, but river-worthy still, its paddle with it. Lonely, half-filled with rain water, it could tell no more of its story than that there it was and that there it had been since perhaps the year before. They emptied it of water and stepped within it and Elizabeth took the paddle. And so, though not unaccompanied by danger, they crossed this river. When they were out of it, it drifted down the stream. "Mother, Mother!" said Eileen. "I saw God the Father looking out of that cloud!"

The next stream, a narrow one, they forded. The water came to the armpits of the women. Elizabeth carried Eileen. Mother Dick held upon her head the bag they had with them, and atop of the bag the gun. Dripping, they mounted the eastern bank, and the sky above was gray and a wind blew like March come again. "Fire," said Eileen. "Oh, Mother, make a fire!"

They had not had one since they left the town. Fire always left a mark, even if it were not immediately detected. Moreover the weather had been with them, balmy, mild and gracious. No one would perish, sleeping in the woods, on such nights. Their anxiety at night was for human foes or preying beasts, not because of cold, though they were

cold by morn. For food the parched corn and the sun-dried meat which they had brought with them had sufficed. But each day the women looked with narrowed eyes at the dwindling store.

This day had risen gray and chill and remained so. And now they were as wet as the river could make them. And tired, tired,—they were tired. Great rocks came down almost to the river marge in broken masses and boulders. They might find a kind of shelter. And now they were quite aside from the Indian trail, in a forest that seemed forever unoccupied of men. Elizabeth put her hands to her brow, stood a moment, then dropped them and spoke. "We'll camp here. I'll make a fire if I can, and we'll sleep, and stay to-morrow and rest. I'll go hunting too."

They were so fortunate as to find in the broken limestone almost a half cavern. Hidden, too, from the river. "Here's ease!" quoth Mother Dick, and putting down her bag turned to building a hearth for the fire, and then, with Eileen, to gathering the driest sticks and moss and cones of the pine that they could find. In the meantime Elizabeth, kneeling, set one stick of a certain size against another, and began to turn the first, as Long Thunder had taught her. It was slow work, it took a long time; as she kneeled there, turning, turning, she had time to see the Shawnee village around the wheel of the year, and Long Thunder in many an aspect, and the hut of bark beneath the oak so vast that it must have been there when Bruce was King of Scotland, and her babe, the half-Indian child. She saw the babe at the breast of Sun in Corn. She saw him older, running naked and laughing along the village paths. Turn, turn, wood against wood! Now he is older, and the medicine man and the warriors will instruct him. He has a bow and arrows. Now he is a youth—now he is a young man. He is an Indian, named for the hawk, the eagle or

the wolf. I shall never see him again, unless it is in another life. They say there is a life in which all the ravelled and broken ends come together again. Turn, turn! It is smoking, the wood is smoking. "Mother Dick, give me the driest moss and shred some bark —"

How bright, how warm, how good and fair, the fire that they made! To dry their clothing, to dry and warm their shivering bodies, how good that was! And to lie and rest after long exertion! But Elizabeth did not rest as yet. When she was dry and warm she took the gun and the shot and powder pouch and leaving the old woman and the child by the fire went hunting.

They had seen wild things enough of late. With good hopes she followed the river until, at no great distance, she came to a gently sloping bank, here wild grass and here thick bushes of alder and laurel. It had every look of a watering place, and here she couched herself among laurels and waited. When an hour had passed two deer, a doe and a stag, came out of the forest to the river to drink. The wind blew from them to her; they came swiftly, unthinkingly, with enormous sylvan grace, stood at the verge and bent their heads to the water. The long flintlock was ready, her finger at the trigger. All of a sudden there rolled upon her her journey through the Great Valley with Conan to be married. It was June and the world at its height, and out of the emerald and joyful forest gazed at them a stag and a doe and a fawn. Her hand fell, the gun sank from her shoulder, she crossed her arms upon her knees and laid her brow upon her arms. "Oh, my life! Oh, Conan, Conan, Conan!"

The deer drank at their leisure and moved away at their leisure. She could not have shot one of these. But she must have food for the three who had built the fire, and when she had waited a long time and a herd came down

the bank she shot into it and brought down a young stag. All its fellows rushed away; with her knife she gave the mercy stroke, then dragged the meat along the river bank to the rocky shelter, the fire, and those for whom, and for herself, she foraged.

They ate and were strengthened. By now it was late afternoon, gray with a moaning wind. They gathered wood, and they cut from the deer all the flesh that they might smoke and dry over their fire, and when this was done gave the carcass to the river. The dusk gathered. They kept up their fire, for the smell of the slain deer might draw the wolf and the panther. They hoped that the rocks hid its glow, were any Indian afoot in this wilderness. But it seemed a great quietness, deprived of human beings, and so they found it. Eileen went quickly to sleep. Mother Dick watched the better part of the night, then touched Elizabeth who sighed and started up.

"It's all safe. I've just mended the fire. Something four-footed came—a catamount, I reckon. I flung a brand and it slouched away." She lay down, and the younger woman took the watch.

They stayed here the next day that was yet cold and somber and the next night that was starry. The third day broke like a bit of heaven. They were rested and fed; they had meat in thin, smoke-dried strips to carry with them; nothing had molested them. This place had been fortunate. The canoe was fortunate. They were a week away from the Shawnee town, a week nearer the mountains of home. Something came about them of cheer. They could go only so many miles a day because of Eileen. The distance also varied with the type of country. But if things went as they had begun, surely, surely, they would come to Burke's Land!

They traveled. Each day the forest grew more beauti-

ful. When it rained they cowered under brush. Then the sun came out and there might be a rainbow. It was five days before they made another fire. Then Elizabeth shot a great bronze turkey, and they kindled a fire in a hilly country beside a stream that had been dammed by beavers. They saw these beings going about their work. Eileen loved the sight. She sat under a birch tree and watched them. The world was full of interest to Eileen.

The next day they had their narrowest escape, and a blessed thing it was that this land encouraged so the evergreen, thick-leaved, close-growing laurel! They lay flat in a great copse of it while the Indian war party went by. There were between thirty and forty braves, painted for war, — Shawnees and Mingos and Wyandots, but none that they had seen before. They hardly breathed, they lay so close to mother earth, though with their faces turned sideways so that they might observe. Danger, danger, danger! Bitter captivity or bitter death!

The moccasined feet went by. Pad, pad, upon last year's leaves! The wonderful copper bodies brushed the laurels. There was guttural speech. One laughed. The string of them withdrew itself like a serpent. Over the leaves, past the thick laurel, under beech and birch and hemlock — gone! Birds came back to the trees, squirrels chattered again. The three human beings lay without sound or motion for quite a long while, until they might be certain that there was no rearguard or straggler. The sun stood right overhead, but they went no further on their road that day, but turning a mile aside from the trail they had stumbled upon, camped without fire and without noise until dawn.

It was the day after this that they began to feel that the best of luck had departed. It was indefinable. Another day, a second, a third, and then it was that they lost the gun. They were now in foothill country, beginning to feel

the approach of the westernmost wall of mountain. They had to cross a narrow stream, violent and loud. Black rocks stood up like fangs. The water swirled between and plunged over high ledges into lusterless, deep, black and cold pools. Just at one place sharp rock and flat rock so nearly spanned the channel that with agility there was crossing. One could overspring the violent water pouring through the crevices. "It only needs to pay attention," said Mother Dick. "Take care, Eileen!"

They paid attention, and Eileen had always been light and skilful in movement. And yet something happened. The rock was slippery, or there occurred illusion. She lost footing, cried out, "Mother!" and in a moment would have been in the water that like thick, descending glass poured over a lip of rock and fell ten feet into a deep pool. Elizabeth caught her in time and swung her back into safety, but in doing it the gun left her hand. Mother Dick cried out and snatched—but it was gone. The racing, glassy water had it—it plunged over the cascade into the pool—was churned, broken and sunken there.

The two women and the child stood upon the eastern bank of the torrent and gazed upon the grave of their food-gatherer. Eileen, who cried so seldom, was crying now. "Did I do it, Mother? Did I do it?"

"No, no, my bairn! I did it. It's gone now, and there's no use fretting. We'll manage."

They took stock. They had left a very little corn, and a few slices of dried deer meat. They had two knives. Certain roots and buds might be eaten, though by themselves these would not go far. They came often, in savannah-like spaces, upon wild strawberries, but these were not yet ripe. They might make snares for birds, set some kind of trap for the lesser wild things, devise some way to take fish. But all that was delay and tarrying.

They were two weeks upon their way. Well, they must trust somewhat to fortune, or maybe it was to God, and make speed. "I can go as fast as anything, Mother!" said Eileen. Mother Dick did not speak. Elizabeth looked at her with a misgiving, a faint chill of fear. Now that she thought of it, she had had that misgiving for a day or two. It was an old woman, though so staunch and magnanimous a one, going thus for days and weeks through the wilderness, sleeping on the cold ground, wet by rain and running water, toiling through brush and briar, over stones and up and down, meagerly fed, ragged, and by each night time dreadfully tired. But while she looked, Mother Dick said, "Yes, indeed, we'll go as fast as anything!" and broke a stick to help herself with.

CHAPTER XXXIV

IT was three days later. They were upon a rocky platform, halfway up a low mountain over which they must go. "I don't know what is the matter with me!" groaned Mother Dick. "It's my lungs, I reckon, and a fever. But I'm not a bit afraid to lie here and die here. You go on with Eileen!"

She was lying with her head in Elizabeth's lap. Said the latter, "Isn't it likely that we'd do that? This is a very good place. We'll all stay here and rest until you're well enough to go on, Mother Dick. I'll get food for us somehow."

"You're a good woman, Elizabeth Burke! But I'd rather you and Eileen would go on home. I'll be going home too, here with the stars at night."

"Don't talk. It hurts you to talk. Haven't you been as good to me, and almost as dear, as my own mother? Wouldn't you have died any time for Eileen? Well, now, we're going to stay here until you're well —"

Elizabeth and Eileen built a kind of arbor of boughs upon the platform, sheltering Mother Dick and themselves too from the rains, the noonday sun and the dews of night. The rock stood bare, but all around, up and down the mountain, grew a tremendous forest, trees centuries old. The earth beneath, save where the ribs of the mountain outcropped, clung soft and black to the foot and ankle. The wild grape tied tree to tree. The underwood was largely dogwood that was now everywhere in whitest bloom. Springs were frequent upon the mountain side; one rose and made a rivulet in the shallow ravine below the rock. Eileen filled a gourd that they had with water and brought it

quickly to Mother Dick. With an elfin precision and finish the child shifted into sick nurse. She gave the patient water, she brought armfuls of leaves and moss to soften her bed, she helped her turn, she sat beside her on the rock, a small, almost naked figure, brown as a berry, and kept up a crystal patter of talk, unless Mother Dick was in pain and could not attend, when she made little, sympathetic sounds and stroked the gaunt, withered hand and arm. When Mother Dick slept the little girl sat with her hands about her knees and her eyes upon the wide prospect of forest and sky. Her mother had said, "You mustn't both sleep at once."

Elizabeth sought food; sought it like a woman very far down the ages who hunted for herself and her young. The Indian dress hung upon her in tatters; leggings and moccasins were gone, shredded away by bush and briar. She moved a half-naked, sun-browned, hollow-eyed woman of the forest. Her knife she had fastened to the end of a five-foot stick, light and strong, making a spear of sorts. The forest was rich, it breathed full spring, she saw game enough, but seeing and claiming were two things. She was hungry, the child was hungry, the old woman would die quickly if she had naught to nourish her. The three had lived now for several days upon a root of which they found scanty supply and upon unripened berries. Her sight dazzled, couched there by the shimmering water, in a great flowering bush. — She rose stealthily, her hand tightening upon her spear. Up and back went her arm, she flung the weapon, rushed out after it and drove the knife home into the creature it had pierced — a raccoon, drinking its last at that stream. She carried it up to the rock. They had there in a crevice a small fire, that they never let go out.

Mother Dick got no better. A cough racked her, a fever burned her. Yet she had by nature such strength that days

and days went on and still she hung there with life on one hand and death on the other. At times there were fits of begging Elizabeth and Eileen to say good-by and leave her. At others she seemed to forget that there had been ever any other life for the three of them than this spread of rock with the forest above and around and below.

The spring mounted in miracle and glory. The forest stood in emerald leaves. They did not starve, though scant was their fare, scant and starveling indeed. They had Indian lore of roots and barks and gums, of a certain fungus, of snares for birds. They took the eggs of birds. And then the strawberries ripened. The raspberries would follow, and then the plums and the blackberries.

No Indians approached them though they watched forever for these. They were fairly high upon the mountain side. Tree tops nodding around, hid well enough the platform that was become their home. Elizabeth, the only one who roamed from it, used a sharpened vision and hearing, used a soundlessness of going. Even so, from any tree or rock, a hunter, a warrior, might suddenly detach himself, might whoop to others behind him, break into chase. But it did not happen. She thought, "If it does happen, shall I run to the rock and give us all up? Shall I go in the other direction, drawing them away from it, never letting them find it? If I do that and they kill me or carry me away, Eileen will die there beside Mother Dick." She thought, "Oh, my God, I must not think!"

But it never happened. It seemed that they might be in a pocket of the wilderness, in one of the many untraversed loops. Given a mountain system that ran, north and south, thirteen hundred miles, and from east to west above two hundred, many such an unknown isle must occur. (Or perhaps, she thought, God made them invisible, caring for a little girl.

She had, one day, an encounter with a bear. A huge old tree rose in her path; it was hollow, she noted, as she made to pass it; presently she saw the cubs. She was hungry, and she had found no food that day for the two upon the rock. She could have slain a cub with her knife—and then arose a picture of Fort Burke, so long ago, when she was like Eileen, and the black cook's bear cub there, and she and Tam and it at play. Now she could not do it—but indeed she knew it for a thing unwise at every count. She looked at the small, happy, frolicking beings with a kind of crooked smile and went by. But then in thirty paces she met the she-bear returning to the tree. The creature growled fiercely and reared her great bulk. Elizabeth thought quickly and then, without showing fear or threatening with her spear, turned aside and walked, not ran, away into the forest. The bear seemed about to pursue, then bethought herself first to see if the cubs were safe, and finding them safe and happy forgot the intruder.

One night on the rock they had to use fire against a wolf.

A more frequent danger lay in the venomous serpents,—the rattlesnake, the moccasin snake and one or two others. Now that the sun was so strong these abounded.

The days dropped by. There were the forest dawns, the forest noons, the forest eves, the forest nights of cloud or unutterable stars. Night presented a rhythm of ghostly silence and inexplicable sound. Slumber was a broken thing. Even the child slept very lightly.

And Mother Dick grew better, it seemed, and they talked of when she should be well. Then would they leave this rock and this mountain and journey on to Burke's Land. They talked of home, lying on this bastion at eve, before them a rosy sunset and a crescent moon and a great lamp of a planet. Maybe there were folk there yet. Maybe

there would be the fort and some of the houses. Maybe there would be the church.

Mother Dick spoke with an echo of her old strength. "Where you had so much there'll be bonny fields still! This kindred and that kindred."

"Oh, Andrew and Phemie and Tarr, maybe. And, aye, of course, I love them. Love's a strange thing, how it picks up the shards and goes on! The shards and the dreams."

"The shards and the dreams turn at last to the City of God and the twelve manner of fruits."

"That's what the minister my father would be saying."

"Aye, he was a man that knew."

Elizabeth looked upon the rose light, the moon and the star. "I feel to-night that the world and life have always made music. But ah, it is a dread music!"

"It loses the dread. It swells into grandness."

"Does it so? Maybe when we die, or maybe when we truly live."

The dusk came on. The three slept. When the morning of early summer dawned, with the mist below them, and the purple rhododendron in bloom, and the mountain head behind them round and shaggy against amethyst and gold, Mother Dick still said she was better. Yet it was not earthly better. This day proved it, and that they had been mistaken on yesterday. The flame had leaped, but now the flame was low.

Elizabeth searched the forest for food. Eileen kept house upon the rock. The sun blazed hotly; she broke fresh boughs and placed them so as to give grateful shadow. Then, when everything had been done, she sat down beside Mother Dick. "Would you like me to tell you a story?"

"Aye, child. If I go to sleep don't you mind."

Eileen in her soft murmur told a story of the Little

People. Before it was done Mother Dick seemed to sleep. The child also, so warm and still was the day, curled herself upon the stone and slept. When she waked her mother was standing looking down upon her and Mother Dick. Eileen sat up.

"I told her a story and she went to sleep."

The other knelt beside the old woman. "Mother Dick!"

Mother Dick opened her eyes. "Aye, I wasn't gone. I did go a part of the way, children. It's fair!"

The sky filled itself with huge clouds, dazzlingly white where the sun yet had power, a menacing gray where it had not. The gray increased, the white went out. The air hung heated and heavy. There was no breeze, not a breath: the forest appeared carved in jade, the sky a veined, gray roof. Far off, thunder muttered, then after a stillness rolled nearer at hand. Again, utter quietude, then a flash that lighted the rock and a monstrous clap. Drops of rain began to fall, hot and large. Afar off began a sound like the sea, wind at a distance in the forest.

There broke a storm, tremendous and prolonged. So defenceless were they upon this rock, cowering, clinging, with fears lest the besom of the wind sweep them from it! It swept away their hut of boughs, it left them bare. The lightnings became white, jagged terrors, the instant thunder appalled. The lightning struck a pine upon the slope below them. They saw it burning, then came the rain like a cataract and blotted it and the forest itself from their vision. At first the rain felt warm and almost welcome, breaking the heat and strain, but then it grew cold and fierce and desolate, it with the wind and the sound and the light. Elizabeth held Eileen clasped to her, and the two very slightly shielded with their bodies Mother Dick. But all the place streamed water and was cold with the combing wind. Their fire was out.

Stair upon stair the tempest lessened. At last it became but a distant mutter, a sighing wind, a slow, fine rain. But there existed no comfort, and now it grew dark. The night passed in some fashion. Toward the latter part of it the rain ceased and the clouds drew apart with a multitude of stars looking down. Eileen was sleeping, curled in upon, drawing warmth from, her mother. The latter sat, the child in her lap and her arms, her eyes upon the streams of stars, listening to Mother Dick's labored breathing. The streams widened to an ocean of lights, all cloud vanished; in the east, behind the mountain head, grew a whiteness.

Mother Dick spoke. "Is the night over?"

"Aye."

"Is the child asleep?"

"Aye."

"It's my last morn here. I want to thank you again, Elizabeth."

"I wish, I wish I were going with you — but for Eileen!"

"Just so. She's keeping you — she's kept you — here for something. She's used."

Her voice failed and she asked for water. Elizabeth laid Eileen upon the rock and filled the gourd they had brought in their bag from the Shawnee town. Kneeling beside the dying woman she raised her head and put it to her lips. "There, there! The dawn's at hand. Then the sun will come to warm us."

"I'll not see this one. Or maybe 'twill be this one, only what we couldn't see of it here. Don't wake the child. You tell her good-by from Mother Dick."

Elizabeth put her hands upon the other's brow and cheek and breast. It was true. She felt a Presence upon the mountain side and in the gulf of air and on the rock. There was no more said for a time. She sat beside the companion who was going her own way now alone. In the east purple

mixed with the silver. Out of an oak near by arose a thrush's note.

Mother Dick spoke again. "Some folk in Burke's Tract made free to say I was a witch. It caught like a leaf fire and the smoke of it was about to choke me. I reckon if I could I would have killed those that started it and spread it. For a long time it heated me to think of them. But that's all over, long over. They had done nothing but raise fears in their garden for so long that now they couldn't help it, poor souls! At last I gathered good herbs for them too. — I've been lying here thinking about you, Elizabeth."

"I hated John and Esther Gellatly and Duncan Gow," said Elizabeth. "Even when John and Esther were killed I couldn't put it down. Even when Father seemed to come to me and entreat for them. . . . But it's gone now, Mother Dick."

"I thought it was. But I wanted to hear. I'm glad."

The great dawn strengthened. Birds were answering birds. The death damp was on Mother Dick's forehead. Her poor breast rose and fell painfully, and her voice now sounded broken and reedy as from far away. "And then, Elizabeth — and then the farther than that?"

"You mean the Indians?"

"Aye."

Elizabeth spoke in a strangled voice. "When I told my babe good-by, there in Long Thunder's hut, I saw things that I had never seen before — in a great flash. I saw how piteous we all are, and how matters struggle in us, matters and ideas. I saw that it wasn't worth while to hate. It was more worth while to understand. I don't know whether that may be forgiveness."

"Yes, it is — thank God for it!" said Mother Dick, and ceased to speak.

Coral entered the east. Under the sky earth had every-

where its mist wreaths, like snow, like pallid roses. The air, after the storm, was like nothing but a kind of heaven, so cool and still, so fragrant-tranquil. Mother Dick's eyes opened, but seemed to see something else and more than dawn in the Appalachians. Elizabeth kneeled beside her. Eileen slept on, her head in the curve of her arm. "The minister — the minister's here!" said the dying woman, and then, "There's a great angel —" and died.

CHAPTER XXXV

ELIZABETH and Eileen buried the frame that Mother Dick had left behind. They dug a shallow grave, laid it there and green and flowering sprays over it, then covered all with earth and stones. Eileen did not tremble or cry. "It's all right, isn't it, Mother?"

"Yes. It's all right."

"I can see her, just as plain! She's walking in the air and smiling at us."

Mother and daughter slept one night more upon the rock. Then they took the two knives and the gourd and the doe-skin bag and set their faces toward Burke's Land. Eileen insisted that Mother Dick went with them.

For nineteen days they had rested upon the side of this mountain. Now it was to reach its crest and go over it. Eileen felt an excitement at that, at what they would see when they came to that top that had overhung them, behind which rose one by one the stars, rose the sun, rose the moon. So they went up under the great trees and then through a breathless scrub that brought their rags of clothing into a yet more ragged condition, that tore their hair and their skin, and then over a wall of rock. That was a hard matter. They must find a seam that they could traverse, and even so, steep it was and dizzy and difficult. The woman lifted the child and kept her ahead, or, herself ahead, stooped and drew her after. At last they made the top and dropped upon the soft, short grass of a narrow plateau.

"Oh, Mother! Look at the mountains!"

They might well cry out, for now they first saw the main walls of the Alleghanies between them and home. The

mountain that they had climbed had hidden a green plain, clad in summer forest, and then wave on wave, from the northern sky to the southern sky, the great mountains. A trick of the light made them seem higher even than they truly were, and they were high enough. They hung, even-topped, like ocean combers; only at considerable intervals had Nature deeply notched the line, forming a pass, a "gap," as the white men in Virginia called it. Through those gaps would be running streams; it was through those gaps that these two must try to go. Unless the finding one took them too far north or south, in which case some great wall itself must be adventured.

But beyond the highest wave upon the horizon, the Appalachian backbone and watershed, the Alleghany Front, beyond that, in the eye of the east, lay that high vale called Burke's Land. Elizabeth saw it clear, through all the earth waves. Home, home, home! even though it were to throw one's self down upon graves.

"How long will it take us, Mother?"

"It all depends. Maybe a month. Maybe much longer. But long or short, we shall come there, Eileen!"

"It is so good to rest!" said Eileen. "But I am dreadfully thirsty."

There would be no water on this mountain top. The fine, dry grass waved in the wind, the wind cooled their heated bodies and filled their lungs with strength, but there was no drink here and no food. So they must climb down the eastern face, and it was deep and wild. At last, in the blazing mid-afternoon, they found water. "Oh, Mother, there never was anything so good! But I am so hungry."

"It seems to me that I see raspberry bushes!" said Elizabeth, and there they were, and on them the fruit, large and ripe. They ate, and then they slept beside them and the water.

In the morning they bathed in this clear flowing shallow stream and had berries for breakfast, after which they set out through a wide, magnificently forested vale to the next mountain wall. At noon they had a river to cross. Elizabeth swam it with Eileen holding her shoulder. By sunset they were under the mountain, at the entrance of a gap. "We came through here," said Elizabeth. "I remember that sugar tree, though then it was fiery and now it is green. Look! They blazed a space and painted figures upon it. It's the road; it's the road home!"

"Oh, Mother, I am so tired, and the sun dazzles me."

"My bairn, I've drawn and driven you too hard! I forget you cannot go like me, nor feel the yearning and the longing that would make me fly if I could! Now we'll find a safe place and rest, and I'll get you food somehow."

A week later found them as much farther on as a starved child could go. Mountains now were around them indeed, pathless and huge and grim. Sometimes they went through gaps where streams brawled and hemlocks made a heavy shade. Sometimes they climbed the mountain straight up, rested upon the narrow top, then made the descent to another knife-blade vale, with another wave before them. Rough and terrible often was this going. The crests of these waves, stricken æons ago into stone, might be three and four thousand feet above sea level. But they were built from a high plateau, and so did not give the effect of those heights. It was rather the aching length of them, the endless walls, wall upon wall, some lower, some higher, but forever walls to be scaled, or at the best to be needled through where occurred those infrequent breaks, the endless life and persistence of them that appalled. They could have picked up now and fairly followed the war road of the Shawnees and all Indians who passed and repassed this country, and it would have been easier for them. It was far easier, they

remembered, so far as travel of the body was concerned, when they had come from the east to the west. The war trail knew all the gaps, all the streams breaking now from the east, and the easiest ascents and descents. Long — age-long — experience had taught the war trail so much, and the trees were carved and the rocks were painted out of that experience.

But if these two kept to that road where was no mark of wheel, nor horse's hoof, none of spade or mattock, where the trees had not been felled or the forest floor interfered with and no fences stood on either hand, if they went that immemorial way — hatchet mark upon the tree, small red, yellow or black figures painted, cairns of stones, giving infrequent direction, and reason with intuition doing the rest — if they took just that road that had preempted the most hopeful way into and out of the labyrinth, they might well enough meet with the due adventures of that road. These they could not face, so they struggled eastward through the Alleghanies as best they might.

Nor were they fortunate now as to food, save that the blackberries and wild plums were ripening. They lived, but now mother and child were gaunt beings. And what with the kind and small quantity of food and with the great and sustained exertion which they must make, they were growing weak. When Elizabeth saw that the child could not go farther, they sought some rocky fastness that had water near it, and there they dropped and stayed, save for the endless search for food, it might be one day, it might be two or three. But if that delay gave rest in one way, it broke the heart in another. As the frames weakened, the passion mounted. Home, home! Let us get home!

But wave after wave continued to rise between them and Last Leap River. When they found that river they would be getting home. "Mother, you'll know it?"

"Yes, dear, I'll know it."

"I'm rested now, Mother."

They were going through a pine wood where was little underbrush, but smooth passage over a purplish floor, between tall, straight, serried trees, in a sighing, harmonious dusk. Suddenly they heard a cry in an Indian tongue, and it was "Halt! Halt!"

They halted for a moment, for very terror, and then they ran. They turned their heads over their shoulders, but they saw naught. It was dusk among the pines, and no bushes or vines to aid with clutching fingers that shouter wherever he was. They had to thread the trees, in and out between the trunks, but so would he who followed. They ran, and it was almost quite dark, and though they thought they heard him coming after them it might be their own beating hearts and drumming ears and their fear. They ran, but Eileen began stumbling and stumbling. Always Elizabeth must retard her own steps for the child, and it was so now.

"Oh, Mother, my side's bursting!"

"A little farther, dear, a little farther! Maybe we can find cover and will throw him off."

They ran, but it was always the pines, and while it was dusk it was not deep night. Down the aisles behind them still held the crimson west. Eileen stumbled and fell, sobbing.

"I can't. I can't any longer!"

Elizabeth kneeled beside her and took her in her arms. "Be quiet then, dear, be quiet! Here's a great tree, and we'll press against its foot and maybe—"

They made themselves in the dusk like a bold root of the tree. They stayed so still, not whispering any more, hardly breathing. And nothing came near them. And they never knew if that had or had not been some solitary hunter, or a warrior, separated from his band, who had heard or seen

them pass in the distance, in the dusk, among the solemn trees, and had shouted, and then had lost the vision or hearing and had thought maybe, in this most ancient wood, "They are ghosts!"

Nothing came near them and they lay beneath the pine till the east grew pale, then rising stole on their way. The pines began to climb a steep ridge. They went up with them and over this wave and upon the farther side found themselves in a ravine choked with rhododendron with a tiny stream cascading down to the base of the ridge. Here was good hiding, and they stayed a day and a night, and then went eastward, eastward still, hearing no more Indian shouts, seeing no red men start up among the trees.

Day by day they toiled in the wilderness, and sometimes they had food and sometimes they had none. It was full summer; they were half-naked, brown, sylvan now indeed of aspect. They had been very long at encounter with the forest and the inhabitants of the forest, and at encounter with the mountains, with the earth as she had risen and fallen and stiffened so a double handful of ages ago. At encounter with the weather and with light and dark and with rooflessness. And all these things seemed both to help and to hinder. And as for time, that became a strange thing.

The child was courageous, willing and selfless. The mother lived for the child. They moved more and more slowly, for they were weak now with want. But every night it was, "We're a day nearer now, Mother, aren't we?" And Elizabeth answered, "A day nearer!" But Eileen grew weaker and weaker, and she herself stumbled now often as she walked. It was very difficult to get food, any food, the poorest. And what they found did not nourish them. The rocky steeps that they must climb grew gigantic to their eyes; the bushes, the vines that withstood

their steps, became like enchanted thickets, impenetrable; the mountain streams that brawled across their way appeared wider and deeper and more powerful than they were. If they made a league a day they did well. They could not measure the earth they covered, they only knew that all things now retarded them. It also seemed that all that they saw of the forest beasts and birds and reptiles mocked them.

Elizabeth began to feel a mortal fear. Phantasy — what if they were moving in phantasy? What if they only thought they were going east? What if they climbed a mountain and then climbed the same mountain again? crossed a stream in the morning and in the afternoon the same stream at practically the same place? What if it were all a treadmill, and God, if there were a God, was letting her find it out? Phantasy! She put it from her with an abrupt laugh. But in a few hours it sprang again. Then, when she was free of it once more, she thought, "What if I am going mad?"

Eileen was very silent now. She staggered on beside her mother, a dauntless, small, skeleton being. Elizabeth lifted her up and over the hardest places. But her light weight was heavy now to her mother. Once she asked, "What is going to happen to us, Mother, if we don't come to Burke's Land?"

"We shall come, my bairn," said Elizabeth. But now she doubted. She doubted if there were a Burke's Land. At any rate it would be all overgrown, with every man, woman and child dead and gone. Dead and gone. Dead and gone. And she and Eileen presently. All dead and gone. Phantasy. All life was a phantasy. Only death began to seem great and true and sweet. Death was the joiner of things broken by life. But she did not wish Eileen to die. There was the contradiction.

CHAPTER XXXVI

AT noon they lay against the trunk of an oak. They had been eating acorns, and now they lay still in the shade, half drowsing, half wandering in mind. Deer went by them, three or four stags with does and fawns, not attending, not attended to. The sun stood overhead, a drowsy wind was blowing, a pair of butterflies dancing up, dancing down, in the gold dust air. In the distance a rifle cracked, then a second. A stag and a doe came breaking through the dogwood and the redbud and the laurel, rushing past the oak to some far fastness of their own. They were gone. Elizabeth rose upon her knees, one hand at her breast, the other clasping Eileen. "Be still, child, be very still! We cannot run—"

They heard Indian hunters taking up their game, heard their voices. They could not see, all manner of underwood growing between; small trees, laurel, curtains of the grape. The voices sounded unconcerned, strong, cheerful in the high noon. Why should they not be? The hunters had guns, the hunters had food, the hunters knew their homes and might move swiftly to them again. Something dwelling in the great forest might seem to raise a question there, and at another time Elizabeth Burke might have felt that spectral, floating, "Is it so?" But now she felt naught save fear, and lassitude with the fear, and a dreamy envy.

The Indians — there seemed to be half a dozen — chose to camp where they had shot the deer. A stream flowed there and the trees were thinner, the ground more open. They built a fire. The woman and child, a bowshot away, smelled it and presently the broiling meat. The Indians

were cheerful. Their voices sounded free, careless, unconstrained, neither triumphant nor sullen, but relaxed, at home in the forest without foes, with a good fire and good venison. Suddenly, in her mind's eye, Elizabeth distinctly saw them as being without war paint. She wondered, but she wondered dimly, for all things now were dim, save only when they were fantastically, unreally bright.

She rose slowly, noiselessly, lifting Eileen with her. Now was the time, when they would be sprawled there by their fire, putting out their hands to their meat. Between this oak and the stream bank thronged the wide, friendly, screening tangle. The two stole away, slowly going shadows through the hot woodland. They went eastward, and that was apparently not the road of the Indians, for they never saw them and they heard them no more. By sunset the two were upon another mountain side.

The next day they were going over flat, bare ledges of rock, oven-heated by the sun. Elizabeth moved ahead, Eileen lagging a little behind, fascinated for the moment by some scales of mica flashing every color in the light. Elizabeth heard the dry, sharp, menacing *Zsss-ss-s*. She wheeled. "Eileen!" Eileen was standing with her hands against her breast, palms out. Her lips were parted, her eyes narrowed and fixed; she stood like a stone before the serpent that had taken its coil. Elizabeth sprang as the snake sprang and her stick with the fastened knife fell upon the rock; she caught with her two hands the terror below the flattened head. It writhed against her, furiously strong and maddened. She struggled with it. The ledge they were upon had a height of twenty feet, rising clear from a world of scrub and thorn. She came to the edge of this, and with all her strength flung the snake from her and from the precipice, then seizing her spear and lifting Eileen in her arms, ran across the ledges until they gave way to low

pine trees and bare soil. Here the child and she sank down. Eileen shook and shivered. "Oh, Mother, he was drawing me into him—drawing me into his eyes! Oh, Mother, I love you so!"

She broke into weeping. Elizabeth lay panting beside her, the blood drumming against her temples. "Oh, child, I am so weak! I could not carry you far now, for all you are just a little bag of bones!"

Day and night, day and night, day and night went by and they were weaker still. They moved slowly, their minds running upon this and that. They seemed always to have been among mountains, always to have faced the east, and any especial purpose in their existence tended now to fade from thought. Something like a slow and distant bell began a ringing in Elizabeth's consciousness. "In a little while she will not be able to walk. Then I must lay her down beneath a tree and sit beside her. And the end will come. And then I shall lie down beside her and the end will come." The bell rang, and then with a flare of strength she sought for food. Sometimes she found it, such as it was, but oftenest not. And now all faring forward was painful exertion. The bell began to ring continuously and nearer.

Another day and another and another. There occurred a great thunderstorm, and when it was passed a bow hung before them, framing mountains that stood behind a deep, wooded vale. It rose, a double rainbow, exquisite and bright, yet not lacking sublimity. And all below it and below the cloud ships preparing to sail away the forest quivered in a green moisture and sweet freshness, and the breath of the earth came up in fragrance.

Elizabeth and Eileen, leaving the cedar under which they had sheltered as best they might from the pelting rain, crept through the shining forest, under the rainbow. Sud-

denly they came upon a narrow river sliding greenly by under maples and sycamores. A cliff, jutting boldly out from the opposite shore, made the water bend, and upon the cliff face some discoloration of the rock had produced, perhaps centuries ago, an apparent enough figure as of a giant eagle with opened wings.

Elizabeth stood still. "Last Leap River!" she said. "Eagle Rock!"

Eileen dropped upon the ground. She did not seem to attend, but lay huddled, a tiny, skeleton shape. Her mother looked at her, and strength and mind came back to Elizabeth. "Child! We are going to live and we are going to find others who are living! We are not thirty miles from home. We've only to follow Last Leap River up to Wild Cat Mountain and leave it then and go through the pass to Burke's Land. Oh, my bairn, I'll find something, something, for us to eat before it is dark! We'll gain a little strength, and now we've got hope." She kneeled and took the child in her arms. "Think, think of home! See home, and feel, 'I want to play again under the big sugar tree.' All your fairies are there, and maybe — Oh, Eileen, Eileen! just maybe we might find Matthew or John! One went one way and one went the other. One surely may be living!"

"See the end of the bow," said Eileen. "It comes right down into the water yonder!"

The searcher for food found some blackberries and an edible root. They ate, they watched the stars come out where the bow had been, they slept under a sycamore upon a clean, shelving bank, across from the cliff with the eagle. A howshot from them, upstream, occurred rapids. Last Leap River rushed and sounded there, but above flowed still and deep and quiet, and below still and deep and quiet. The song of the rapids lulled them, nor did they mind the melan-

choly owl that hooted somewhere in the forest, nor the bark of a fox. They slept, the sense of home as a tent above them.

Elizabeth waked before the dawn. It was coming. She needed no clock. She knew the feel of it, and also the stars that stood now in the east. She left the tree and went to the edge of the water and sat there. The rapids sounded loudly, all the rest being so unearthly still. But as there was rhythm, the ear soon ceased to attend. Mist hung over the river, but thinly enough to let that morning star be seen that was set now like a lamp above the mountains. Elizabeth put her hands together and her brow upon them and prayed.

The silver grew in the east. Purple islands appeared in that sea above the mountains of earth. The torch of Hesperus went out before the approaching sun. Mist now rose from the river and the forest, and in it all things seemed vaporous and unsubstantial. But yet the light grew. Rising, Elizabeth returned to the sycamore. But Eileen still slept. For a moment the mother thought, "I will leave her sleeping while I go again to those berry bushes and the place where I found that root." But all that was at a distance from the water and out of call. Eileen might sleep on, but if she waked she would feel alarm. Elizabeth stood a moment, then went back to the edge of the river. It drew her, it held her, Last Leap River.

Gold began to take the place of silver. The islands that had been purple were now golden and a pale, quick red. Mist yet clung to the water and the earth, but it was thin enough to let color and shape to an extent come through. The ball of the sun yet tarried below the horizon.

She stood at the verge and she looked up Last Leap River. It was possible to see above the rapids, where the stream ran quiet and deep. Shadowy in the mist a canoe

moved upon the river. It seemed a large one, it seemed that there were in it three men. It was coming toward the rapids, but it would not be able to pass them. As she watched, scarce breathing, the canoe turned toward the bank above the line of cliffs that bore the eagle. The shore sloped easily here, and indeed a narrow strip of earth ran all the way along at the foot of the rock, beside the rapids, until they were passed and the stream flowed still and deep once more. She saw that the canoe would be lifted from the stream and borne around the rapids. The prow touched the bank; the men were out; the canoe lifted shoulder high. To better adjust it certain sacks and bundles were taken from it. These had the look of trader's matters. At once when the men stood up, she had seen that they were clothed and were not Indians. Although the distance was small, the mist prevented further knowledge.

She stood without motion, watching. The portage took no great length of time. Bush and tree now hid them, now gave them forth again, but the mist was always between. It was, however, lifting, the mist was lifting. Above the mountains pushed a horn of gold. The men came again to the river, this side now of the rapids. Their boat rode upon the glassy, dark water. One by one, in they stepped. Two seemed to her strong men in early prime; they were tall, rightly knit and supple, as mountain men should be. The third was shorter and older, and though active, moved with a difference. She stared at them, a strange look in her eyes, but if there was knowledge now, it moved yet below consciousness. The canoe came gliding on, down Last Leap River, that ran so, only widening, for many a mile, until it joined another river, that in its turn joined another, and all going westward. It kept to the north bank, over against her where she stood, the mist yet veiling her, and a wild grape dropping, too, a curtain from the arm of

an elm. It was even now with the eagle upon the rock. It was just across and would be going by. She struggled for voice, seeming all the time to herself far away, long dumb, dead perhaps.

There had been no speech in the canoe since the men had taken to it again, this side the rapids, only the dip of the paddles. But now, coming under this eagle rock that was known for a curiosity throughout the region, one of the men shouted to the pictured bird, "Good day to you, King Eagle!"

"Robin! Robin! Robin!"

At the cry from the southern bank the canoe gave a great start and then checked itself. The paddles hung suspended, the men brought their bodies about, their eyes searching the opposite bank.

"What was it? What was it? It was a piercing cry!"

"Go across!"

The canoe shot through the mist, over the narrow river. There was a little point, marked by an elm tree and a grapevine swinging from on high, cascade upon cascade, until the last leaves and tendrils almost reached the earth from which had sprung the thick, red-brown, shaggy stem.

"It came from there. There is some one standing there!"

It ran through Elizabeth's heart and head. "Oh, my God, that is Stephen Trabue!"

Yet she could not speak, could cry out no more. She stood in the mist, among the grape leaves, a wasted, brown and barely clothed being, come home from so far and so long ago. She saw the lifting mist, the rising sun, the eagle on the rock, the approaching boat, Robin her brother and Trabue, but she stood without motion or speech. She felt a strange, a great expectancy, but knew not what she expected. Only it seemed that all the dawns on earth were

gathered into this dawn, while over it, high, so high, hung another dawn that was not of earth. She was aware somewhere of song, but she did not know whence it came, nor of what, just, was the singing.

The canoe touched the bank. The tallest man stepped forth, turning his face to the elm tree. And it was Conan Burke.

Eileen waked to find two standing above her. There was her mother wrapped in a long, blue cloak, with a face like heaven, and there was her father. So of course, Eileen concluded, she was in heaven, and she began to cry. Then her father kneeled and took her up, and his face too was working. "Darling! Darling!"

"Is it heaven?" asked Eileen. "Is it home?"

"Yes, it is heaven! Yes, it is home!" But her mother said, "We are not dead, my bairn, but living!"

The great boughs swept around and hid them. It was golden morning, and just they three. Eileen pressed herself against her father, but her eyes were for her mother. She seemed to see light, raying out, and that was strange. Then it occurred to her to ask about Matthew and John.

"Alive and well, darling, darling! And Kirstie, and Andrew and Nancy and Phemie and Rob and their children in Burke's Tract, and Tam in Williamsburgh."

"And weren't you killed, Father?"

No, she was told, he was not. He had been beaten down and terribly hurt. But Tom Kennedy and other men came over the brook in time and saved him. Only he lay all that dreadful autumn very near to death from his wounds — lay at the fort, with Aunt Kirstie nursing him, and Matthew and John creeping in and out and putting their cheeks against his hand. But he got well, and winter came, and he could do naught but build a cabin there by the great

sugar tree where the house had stood, a cabin for Kirstie and the two boys and himself. Then the snows melted and with Robin he tried to go toward the Ohio, following those Shawnees. But war was everywhere—a terrible summer—they could do naught, naught; and a cry arose for every man at home or in the ranger companies. Hair had to whiten, hearts had to break, as they would. Autumn, winter, spring, summer, and again nothing, nothing!—saving terrible war. Again autumn, winter, spring— All suddenly, Peace. Not in Europe, but in America, where for long the French had been having the worst of it. Not yet formally with the French, but with the Indian tribes that had been drawn in. Peace! The peace pipe smoked with the sachems, the hatchet buried, the wampum belts given, the treaties made. It had taken time to get the news everywhere, to make sure against wandering Indian bands that might not have heard. It was summer before that was done and men were free for their own adventure. And his adventure and Robin's and Stephen Trabue's was now toward the Ohio, to the villages there, village after village if need be, for tidings, for some token of life or death. So they set their boat on Last Leap River and were following the westward flowing waters and the westward traveling sun. Then the rapids, Eagle Rock, and a cry from the bank.

The substance of all this was given Eileen. Elizabeth had already received it, when she and Conan stood locked in the first rays of the sun, there by the water's edge, when Robin and Stephen Trabue went a little away, busied themselves with their faces turned to the water and the eagle cliff. She and Conan stood embraced; they gave, they took, their tidings, their history; the mists lifted, the great sun shone. They had truth and sorrow and joy, they had love.

Eileen stretched her thin, thin arms. She smiled, and her small face resumed its elfin look. In a matter-of-fact

tone she made a statement, "There is Mother Dick just beyond you."

"Aye, it may well be!" answered Elizabeth. "But now come, my bairn! Your father has food for you."

Out beyond the leafy screens a fire was crackling and burning. And now they heard Robin's shout. "Breakfast!"

Conan bore Eileen, and his other arm was around Elizabeth. They moved as one piece. And here by the water edge sang the fearless fire and rose the smell of venison and corn-meal mush, and here was Robin, looking as he always did, only with lines in his face, and Stephen Trabue, an old man, but wiry and black-haired yet.

The water shone, the canoe rode it like a dark swan, a light and gay breeze ruffled the forest, the great figured eagle stood out upon the rock, the sky roofed all with the purest blue. They sat on stones about the fire that was so beautiful and ate the food that was so good. Now and then they spoke, but not often or at length, for they were still aware of the solemnity of happiness. Eileen continued to have her own private belief that it was heaven.

THE END

